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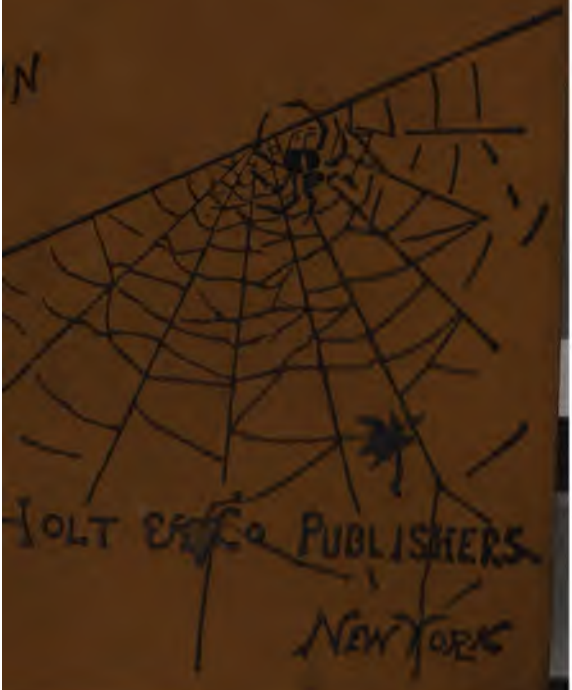

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WHOM GOD HATH JOINED.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

FORTY years ago there was still remaining in the heart of one of our eastern cities an old family graveyard, a relic of colonial times. Originally it had been a long way out of town, but the city, which in its infancy clustered all in a heap about what are at present busy and bustling wharves lined with the steamboats that have replaced the sloops and other primitive river craft, had climbed up the hills, cut away the woods, and laid out streets through what were once open meadows or the grounds surrounding the country-seats of the old colonial aristocracy. The general burying-grounds, belonging to the various religious denominations lay beside each other on one of the three hills on which the town is built, and were still beyond the limits of the city proper, yet so little beyond that already there was talk of buying lots for a cemetery some miles further off and removing them altogether. But this private burial-place, the property of an old Dutch family now nearly extinct, still held its own, though for many years no interment had taken place there. Its owners, two maiden sisters, Katharine and Elizabeth Overbeck—Aunt Katy and Aunt Leespat the generation next younger than themselves called them—had turned deaf ears to all proposals to buy and alter the disposition of the grounds.

Reasoning with them having proved useless, the affair was by general consent allowed to wait the limit of their lives for its final settlement, when the next heir promised himself to turn an honest penny and oblige his neighbors.

Meanwhile the town had grown up all about it. Streets ran past two sides of its time-stained wooden palings ; at one end was a blacksmith's forge, with its resounding anvil and its heart of glowing coals ; on a fourth side a long, rambling brick house, two of whose lower windows gave directly on the untrimmed grass and rank burdocks of the graveyard. Another small and high window looked into it from the kitchen, built on at the back years after the erection of the main structure.

When she climbed up on the table which stood under this window Kitty Danforth could just see the fence which inclosed, in the upper end of the burying-ground, two graves, set apart from the others for some reason which she could not divine. The long, grassy space with its defaced and darkened grave-stones, on many of which the names were half obliterated, the weeds growing high and rank about them, the few trees near the street, had a sort of fascination for her which was quite unmixed with fear or with any sentiment of respect for the dead. More than once she had escaped out of the low windows of the long dining and sitting-room, when they stood open in the summer time, and enjoyed a good romp in and out among the tombs before she was discovered and brought back. "You ought to be ashamed to be racing like that over dead people," was said to her at such times, to which Kitty answered : "Do you think they care ?" And when, after her school-days began, her play-mates, coming down the hill with her in the late afternoons, would sometimes say, "I should not like to live so close beside a graveyard ; don't it make you afraid to go to sleep in the dark ?" Kitty would open wondering eyes. "I am never afraid of

any thing," she said. "And after people are dead what can they do to you?"

Kitty was now seven years old, and already her great pleasures were to read and to romp, as her mother and Aunt Rebecca Forrest declared, the one in a prophetic spirit and a somewhat querulous, old-maidish tone, and the other with a sense that although little girls should not be quite so much like boys, yet there was still abundant time for better things.

"That child is a perfect tomboy, Eliza," Aunt Rebecca said one day when she saw her flying head-long down the hill on her way from school, leading a shouting troop behind her. "She ought to be made to behave herself."

"Kitty," said Mrs. Danforth, turning to the child as she came in with her cheeks red, her dark eyes shining, and her hair in a tumble under her loosened hood, "how often have I told you not to run so in the street? Little girls should walk and act like ladies."

"And not scream like hawks," added Aunt Rebecca, "nor turn in their toes like parrots. Just see how she stands!"

"I *had* to run," said Kitty, between explanation and indignation. "We were all Indians, and my name is Thayandanagea, and I was running the gauntlet. And I had to turn my toes in, too, for all Indians do. The book I read last night said so."

"Well, Thayandanagea," answered her mother, smiling, "when you come into the wigwam you must remember to turn them out again and to knock the snow off out on the stoop. Go back into the hall and take off your hood and your rubbers, and come and sit down to your patchwork. You have hardly time to make your block before tea."

To make a block every afternoon had been Kitty's daily obligation for more than two years; there was always one lying ready for her on the top of mother's work-basket, neatly turned down and basted for her

overhand seam, when she came in from school. She had a great pile of them in the under-drawer of the high red bureau with brass handles which stood in the corner of the sitting-room, beside the door which opened into the hall. Sometimes she spread them all out on the rag carpet, with empty spaces as big as themselves between them, to see how many quilts they would make when they were joined, and also in the hope of beguiling from mother those stories of the past in which Kitty delighted, and which the sight of the bright bits of chintz was always likely to evoke. Her patchwork was a sort of family history to Kitty, and much more interesting in that light than in the plodding business of making the separate blocks. That one with the turkey-red ground, spotted with tiny green and yellow roses, which she always put in the center, was made of a scrap of the dress mother wore when she was taken, at six months old, to assist at Aunt Jane Richard's wedding. Aunt Jane was father's aunt, having been Grandfather Danforth's sister, but she was mother's godmother as well—a degree of relationship which it puzzled Kitty mightily to understand.

"What made her your godmother?" she asked one day.

"Oh! she stood for me when I was baptized," replied her mother.

"But I haven't any godmother. Why don't every body have one? And what is it to be baptized? Have I been?"

"Yes," said her mother; "and a fine squalling you made about it, too. I had to take you out of church directly it was over."

"Oh!" said Kitty, with a gleam of intelligence, "I suppose this is the mark of it." And she turned up her sleeve to look at a round white scar above her elbow. "I thought the doctor did that in the house for fear of small-pox. And why hadn't I a godmother?"

"No," said Mrs. Danforth, laughing, "it wasn't your

baptism that made that scar. And you have no godmother because we are Methodists."

"But how did you get one? Isn't Aunt Jane a Methodist too?"

"Now she is, but when I was a baby all our folks were Episcopalians, and Aunt Jane too."

"I don't understand at all," said Kitty. "What is an Episcopalian, and why do they have them? Do Episcopalian little girls have them now? I never heard of any body's godmother except yours."

"Oh! it is their nonsense," said her mother, "and their holding on to old Catholic mummeries and superstitions."

Kitty had never yet got beyond that point in the solution of the mystery, and had many speculations about it in her small head whenever Aunt Jane came down the hill to pay her fortnightly visit, arrayed in black silk, laid across her thin and narrow chest in a multiplicity of folds, at the meeting of which showed her chemisette of crinkly white crape. Kitty's memory did not recall Aunt Jane before her widowhood, although one of the ineffaceable recollections of her own short past was of a walk up the long Hawk Street hill—which still looked endless and dangerously steep to her childish eyes—holding on to father's forefinger, and of seeing in the parlor at Aunt Jane's, after that walk was ended, a long red box in which Uncle Richard Richards was lying with a silver dollar over each eye.

Nowadays she sometimes climbed the same hill when she went with her mother on alternate Fridays to see Aunt Jane. Mrs. Danforth was a home-keeping body and seldom went out of her own door on week-days except to pay these visits, and to go to class-meeting every Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock. Kitty had once accompanied her to class in a little room which adjoined the larger one where Sunday-school was held, and into which a narrow flight of uncarpeted stairs led down from the church above. The minister

was sitting at a small table with his back to these stairs when Mrs. Danforth and Kitty entered, and perhaps a dozen women sat with sober, unsmiling faces on the narrow bench which ran round three sides of the room. The minister started a hymn, which the class-members took up in more or less musical voices. Kitty for the first time heard her mother try to sing, in a thin, weak voice which did not keep the tune at all, but went off in little, unexpected squeaks where the lines ended. Then the minister prayed, and afterward the women rose, one after the other, and made speeches of varying lengths which were both unintelligible and uninteresting to Kitty, whose mind, ever since she began to see what was going on, had been filled with the thought that mother's turn would soon come, and with wondering what she would say and how she would say it, and whether the minister would call her sister, as he did the others. When at last she felt her mother rising from her place, and looked up under her bonnet, she saw a faint flush on the cheeks usually so colorless and yet so bright, and heard her say in a tone not much above her breath that she "felt to bless the Lord for what He had done for her soul." Kitty suddenly felt herself grow hot from head to foot with an unaccountable shame, and a burning wish that mother wouldn't talk out so before all those people. And, almost before her wish was fully formed, Mrs. Danforth sat down again, having made the shortest and lowest-toned recital of her "experience" of any person present. Class, Kitty learned afterward, was the most disagreeable to her mother of all her religious duties, and the only one which she recognized as imposing on her any obligation to speak in meeting. She never again took her little daughter with her, nor, indeed, would the child have been willing to go. Her curiosity had been fully and unpleasantly satisfied the first time.

Going to Aunt Jane's was quite another matter. It

was a pleasure she did not always share with her mother, chiefly because she had to miss afternoon school whenever she did so—a circumstance which made it all the pleasanter as often as it happened. Friday-afternoon school was a weariness to Kitty. It always ended in a mysterious exercise in which all the boys and girls were kept standing for an hour in front of their benches, repeating certain strange formulas which Kitty knew, years after, must have belonged to the Westminster Shorter Catechism. She never succeeded in retaining any of it in her memory, but had to be prompted every time to each word by little Miss Merrifield, who complained much of her stupidity in this regard. "It is no great matter," said Mrs. Danforth once in Kitty's hearing, after the usual complaint had been made at the time of paying the quarterly bill; "I am not anxious to have her learn the Presbyterian catechism." Perhaps she took Kitty with her all the more frequently after that. At least the child thought so, and felt in consequence a certain disrespectful gratitude to the catechism.

Aunt Jane Richards lived in a white two-story, clapboarded house with solid green shutters, a low stoop painted yellow, and a green door with a brass knocker. Since her husband's death another old lady had come to live with her, and the two kept house all alone, without a servant, although Aunt Jane owned this house and others besides it and had money in the bank. She had it also in a box in the mahogany bureau which stood in the passage between her bedroom and the parlor. Kitty knew that, because she had seen her go there to get out the silver dollar she gave her last New Year's day. She had wondered at the time if it were one of those she had seen on Uncle Richard's dead eyes, but had concluded that those were in all probability buried with him. Kitty liked old Mrs. Armstrong with her square, mild, wrinkled face inclosed in a frilled cap tied under her chin, better than she liked Aunt Jane, whose face was thin, her

forehead puckered, her nose sharp, and her eyes small and bright. But she liked her pretty well, too, and delighted in going down stairs with her into the kitchen, and sitting perched up in the high window-seat beside the cat to watch the process of putting the pan of raised biscuits into the oven and waiting for them to come out again, high and brown and hot, ready to be eaten with butter, and smoked beef, and cheese, and quince preserves. The warm milk and water which Kitty called tea never looked so nice as when she drank it out of Aunt Jane's thin pink china cups, though it often tasted better. And she liked better than all to sit on her carpeted stool on the rug behind the high, polished wood stove, reading, while mother, with blue ribbons in her lace cap, stitched a wristband by the window, and the two old ladies in their black haircloth rockers, knitting in hand, talked with her about the next conference, or the visit of the presiding elder, or the new minister's family, and other things of the sort that Kitty's ear was familiar with, though her mind was indifferent to them.

There were not many books at Aunt Jane's, and not very interesting ones as a rule; but all books were agreeable to Kitty, though some were undeniably more agreeable than others. What she read there oftenest was an old copy of Fox's *Martyrs* with leather covers and woodcuts and queer s's and some of the pages discolored with water and others entirely missing. The horrors described in it made Kitty tremble, although she had said truly that she was never afraid of any thing. She asked her mother once why people did such wicked things to other people, though how they could bear to do it was more puzzling to her still. She was told in answer that it was done by Catholics to punish Protestants, "people who believe as we do," for not believing otherwise. "Believing what?" asked Kitty. "Nobody could make *me* say I believed a thing if I didn't—no, not if they made me drink

water until I burst." That was the torture which had struck most forcibly her young imagination.

Within the last few months there had been a change in the Danforth household. The maid-of-all-work whom Kitty remembered from her infancy, who had, indeed, come to Mrs. Danforth in the early days of her marriage, and rocked the cradles and wept beside the coffins of the two children who preceded Kitty, had at last gone away to a home of her own, having married a Scotch baker with three grown-up sons. The history of this maid, partly known and partly fancied, was also one of the treasures of the little girl's memory. Her thoughts often went back, in her solitary playtimes in the garret on rainy days, to the time when Margaret, then a child not much older than herself, was left fatherless and motherless to fall into the hands of old Mrs. Daniel, down on the Bethlehem road below the city, by whom she had been cruelly ill-used and despoiled of the little that had been left her by her parents. In Kitty's fancy Mrs. Daniel was a sort of fabulous monster, an ogress tempered by the Biblical associations connected with her name. "Only," she said to herself, "it was Margaret who was in the den, and Mrs. Daniel fed her to the lions."

"After my mother's death," the girl had once said to her, "I never had a friend nor heard a kind word until I came into this house."

And now, although she had gone out of it, she was still not far away. From the parlor windows Kitty could look straight down Hubbell's Alley, at the end of which, behind a grass-plot and one or two young trees, was the one-story double wooden house, painted yellow, in one half of which Margaret now worked harder than ever for her new master. Sometimes, but not often, Kitty was allowed to pay her a visit on Saturday afternoons, and enjoyed herself much, curled up on the chintz-covered lounge reading *Dombey and Son*, of which the successive numbers, in green paper covers, lay on the little table where Margaret's ready-

made sons had left them. But she ran home when John came in to his supper—the big, burly man with red whiskers dusty with flour, a general mealiness, indeed, pervading him from head to foot.

"I think he is cross to Margaret," Kitty told her mother, who sighed and said she feared there was trouble in store for the poor wife.

"She certainly won't have much difficulty now in keeping her vow," she added, "nor much merit either."

Margaret's vow? That also belonged to Kitty's bits of knowledge. The girl had been converted and joined the church a year or two after coming to Mrs. Danforth, at the same time, in fact, with her mistress; and when the new down-town church had been started, with Kitty's father as chief contributor and most zealous promoter, Margaret had determined to give all she could save from her wages into the sinking-fund, and vowed that she would never again buy a silk dress until the building was out of debt. She had a stiff black silk at the time, and a watch with a thin gold chain which had been her father's, and which old Mrs. Daniel had surrendered to her when conscience made her send for the girl before her death and ask pardon for the worse than cruelties inflicted upon her in her youth. She looked very nice, Kitty thought, when she sat in the pew on Sundays.

"Now she will earn no more," said Mrs. Danforth, "and John Marshall will drink up all that might be saved. If she manages to get a clean calico to wear to church after what she has are worn out she will be lucky. What possessed her to marry that drunken old Scotchman is beyond me!"

Her place had been taken by another Margaret—Mag Bannan, Kitty called her—the first Irish girl she had ever seen. What rosy cheeks she had, and what shining rows of teeth; what curling lashes fringed her gray eyes, and what waves of black hair rolled behind her ears! Kitty liked to look at her, and to hear her

sing as she went about her work. Once, when all the rest of the folks had gone to evening prayer-meeting, the girl had sung her a long ballad about "Alonzo the brave and the fair Imogen," which went far toward altering the child's opinion that there was nothing to be afraid of in living so near to graves. When she was alone at night afterward she sometimes thought of it and kept her sleepy eye, fixed on the lamp, lest it should burn blue and betray the presence of a ghost. But still she was more curious than afraid.

It was now the eve of Christmas—a day to which Kitty had never been taught to attach any special importance. For her there were but three great days in all the year: Fourth of July, when the ringing of bells wakened her at dawn, and cannons roared, drums beat, soldiers passed, and father took her at night to see the fireworks in the Capitol Park; Thanksgiving, with its turkey and pumpkin-pies and company to dinner; and New Year's, when she hung up her stocking and found it in the morning full of candies, with one of Aunt Anne's olëkoeks in the toe, and when there were callers until bed-time, and a table spread with fruit-cake and nuts and oranges in a corner of the parlor. But with Christmas she had, as yet, no associations. To-night Margaret was putting her to bed—a task usually performed by her mother or Aunt Rebecca Forrest. But mother was busy this evening, and Aunt Rebecca was away on a visit.

"She has gone to Orange County," explained Kitty to the maid, as she sat on grandmother's chest behind the drum-stove which brought up a little heat from the fire down stairs—"to Orange County, to visit our relations. I don't know if that is where oranges come from, but I suppose so. We have a great many relations there, for mother's grandfather was brought there when he was a little boy no bigger than me. His father and mother had come away from France because they were Huguenots." Kitty made three syllables of the word and sounded both of the final letters.

"And what are Huguenots?" asked Margaret, all attention.

"Protestants, don't you know! Just as we are. The Catholics were very wicked and wouldn't let them stay at home."

"Sure, you come honestly by the black drop," said Margaret, pulling off Kitty's shoe, "if it's been in the family all that time."

"The black drop! What is that?"

"It's only a way I have of speaking, honey," replied the girl, bethinking herself. "And what are you going to do to-morrow?"

"Just what we did to-day, I suppose. Why?"

"And won't you go to church?"

"To-morrow will be Tuesday," said Kitty. "People don't go to church on Tuesdays."

"Not on Christmas? Troth, then, it's haythens ye are, and not Christians at all."

"Why," said Kitty, "do Irish people go to church on Christmas? Are you going? How can you, when it's ironing-day?"

"'Deed I am, then, before daylight. I hope there'll be a moon, for it's dark the streets will be at four o'clock!"

"Mag," said Kitty, "you have to sleep in this room while Aunt Rebecca's gone. Mother said so. Wake me up and take me with you to-morrow morning. I don't know how the moon looks on the snow; I always have to go to bed at seven o'clock."

"The mistress 'ud be angry," said Margaret.

"No, she wouldn't," protested Kitty. "You could wrap me up and put on my rubbers."

"I'd be afraid, then," said the girl; "and besides, you'd be too sleepy. It's hard enough to get you up at seven o'clock, let alone four." And she lifted Kitty up and deposited her in the high bed as she spoke.

"Mag," the child went on, as the blankets were tucked about her, "what is Christmas, anyway?"

"Sure, it's our Lord's birthday. Didn't you know

that? Go to sleep now; the mistress'll think I'm never coming down to the dishes!"

"The Lord's birthday!" thought Kitty, as she lay awake in the dark. She had had a birthday herself last Friday, when mother had given her seven little slaps and a new red merino dress, and father seven great kisses and seven new copper cents. Pennies Kitty called them, just as she called twenty-five of them two shillings, and the little silver piece which mother had offered to exchange for six of them, if she would put it in her tin savings-bank, a sixpence. Kitty had declined the silver, for she seldom had money to spend, and her soul had for days past been hungering for *Goody Twoshoes* and the *Babes in the Wood*, of which she had read and re-read the first pages as they lay displayed in the toy-shop window. Four of her pennies went for them, and one for one of Mrs. Taylor's red and white striped jackson balls, so that her savings-bank was only two cents richer by reason of her birthday. That the Lord had a birthday also was an idea unfamiliar to her, although she remembered now that father had read that chapter about the stable in Bethlehem, and the angels singing in the sky that very evening, as they sat around the table after tea for night prayers. Her mind went back and dwelt upon it until she fell asleep.

When she awoke there was a light burning on the bureau and Margaret sat on the floor pulling on her stockings. Kitty awoke as healthy children do, with her wits all about her, and her thoughts went back at once to her wish the night before. Slipping out of bed, she went up in her bare feet behind the girl.

"Do dress me and take me along," she begged. "I will put on my own shoes and stockings."

"Sure, I suppose it can't hurt you, for once," said good-natured Margaret. "But you must be quiet and make haste. I heard three o'clock strike before I got up, and it's a long walk we'll have."

The moon was not down yet, and the stars were

shining in the clear December sky, when they came softly out of the hall-door. But the street-lamps were all out, and no one seemed to be stirring in the neighborhood except themselves. When they got down by Kane's Walk, and Kitty saw the shadows of the trees on the untrodden snow behind the palings in front of the great house, and the icicles sparkling in the pale light, she said nothing, but she drew a long breath of pleasure and reflected that people lost a great deal by sleeping at night instead of in the daytime.

At last they reached the church, a large one in the lower part of the town, not far from the building where Kitty was taken every Sunday, and as yet almost the only one of its kind in the entire city. The vestibule was dark, and there was a close smell which the child found unpleasant. The church was already nearly filled, and they took seats far back toward the entrance, under a side gallery. Those were the days of whale-oil lamps, and the body of the building was ill-lighted and gloomy. But up at the further end there was such a blaze of sparkling candles as Kitty had never seen before. Every thing was strange to her—the queer, monotonous singing, of which she could not understand a word ; the odor and smoke of the incense ; the ringing of the bells, and the incessant shuffling of feet and coughing inseparable from a large crowd of people of all ages collected in the cold of an early winter morning. But at last, at the sound of one of the bells, a perfect silence fell and every head was bent except that of Kitty, who still sat on the bench and looked straight before her. But only for a moment. Then a sudden, strange emotion of awe possessed her and she, too, sank down on her knees by Margaret's side and dropped her head in her hands. Nor did she lift it—although she had a vague consciousness that people were moving all about her, and that even Margaret had left the pew—until at last the girl touched her and said it was time to go back home.

"What ails you, Kitty dear?" she asked as they came out of the porch. "Have you been asleep, that your eyes look so wild?"

"No," said Kitty, clinging fast to her hand. "But what was it, Mag?"

"What was what?"

"What the man in the gold cloak was doing? What was that he held up in his hand when the bell rang and all the people kept so still?"

"It was the Blessed Sacrament," said Margaret.

"And what is that?"

"The Lord himself," said the girl slowly, adding presently, in a lower and much quicker tone, "Sure Protestants are haythens."

"You said that last night," said Kitty. "But heathens live a long way off, and we send missionaries to them. I belong to the missionary society, and I put a penny in the box the first Sunday of every month. And you are a Protestant yourself, aren't you?"

"The Lord be praised, I'm not!" said Margaret promptly.

"What then? I thought every body was Protestant in this country."

"Faith, it's not quite so bad as that," said Margaret, laughing. "I'm a Catholic, and so were all the people in the church this morning."

Kitty was amazed. She said, with some hesitation and after a pause:

"But they are all very wicked. They burn up Protestants, and put them on racks, and break all their bones. I read about them at Aunt Jane's. And we send missionaries to them, too."

"'Deed you do," said Margaret bitterly. "There was one of the black lot came to me father, and he dyin' o' famine, and offered him a tract and a piece o' mate on Friday, and nothin' at all the rest o' the week because he wouldn't ate that. Don't you believe all you hear, Kitty darlint. 'Tisn't Catholics only that know how to burn folks up an' tear 'em in pieces.

Many's the wan of me own blood that's had tha sauce served to 'em by Protestants, bad c them ! "

Kitty was silent, as she usually was when an e new idea came to her. It was only after it had the young darkness of her mind, and been turne and over, that it fructified into speech. And, over, what she had felt in the church was yet st to her than the new thoughts inspired by wh companion was saying as they walked quickly th the dark and silent streets. Margaret undresse put her back in bed again when they reached hom she slept soundly until daylight. But when he ents learned of her night adventure Margaret fe disgrace and was sent away. And gradually t membrance of it faded in the mind of the little leaving only a vague impression, which lay ther a late-germinating seed.

CHAPTER II.

IN the summer following Kitty's seventh birthday her father had a fall as he was getting out of the buggy in which he usually drove himself to and from his place of business, and broke one of the bones of his right leg. The surgeon who was summoned, being momentarily engaged, sent a callow student to make ready for his impending visit, and the young fellow practiced surgery according to his lights—which were, indeed, not special, but common to his time—by binding up the injured member in cold compresses and applying pounded ice. The circulation, so effectually interfered with at the start, avenged itself by retarding the healing process, and the patient was kept in-doors for many unnecessary weeks. Yet, despite her pity for her father, Kitty thoroughly enjoyed at the time, and ever after remembered with pleasure, the period of his confinement in the sick chair which was nightly extended into a couch. A revolving and removable desk which had been fitted on to one of the arms held the books and writing materials with which he solaced himself for this sudden interruption of the course of a busy life. Kitty had come honestly by her love of books, having inherited it from both father and mother. But whereas the latter of late years read little except denominational religious publications and an occasional novel, protesting always that *Ivanhoe* and *The Spy* were vastly preferable to *Pickwick* and *Oliver Twist*, and that none of them was to be compared in the matter of entertainment with the *Scottish Chiefs* or *The Children of the Abbey;* while she studied Pollok's *Course of Time* with

great diligence and thought it a sublime poem, superior in most respects to *Paradise Lost*—her husband's tastes were of a wider and more critical sort. As ardently religious as his wife, his devotion burned with a more variable and impulsive flame, kindled rather by his emotional than his intellectual nature. He had "experienced religion," as the phrase went, at the time when he had been subjected to his keenest sorrow—the loss of a passionately-loved and only son. His Methodism was the accident of his surroundings, but by temperament he was devout. By temperament, also, he was pleasure-loving and artistic; but, with the exception of one passage in his youth, when, after having been driven from home by a harsh father for some trifling rebellion, he had for a time become a strolling player, this part of his nature had been granted small scope. The actor's life soon disgusted him, and he settled down, some years before his marriage, to hard labor at a mechanical trade, abandoning it for a partnership in manufacturing on a larger scale about the time of Kitty's birth. He held a tight hand over himself, and was, by instinct as well as by principle, as honest as the day, but he was not, like his wife, ascetic and reserved by natural predisposition. Now, in his enforced leisure, he found that the prolonged study of Henry's and Clark's commentaries, and the perusal of Wesley's sermons, the *Ladies' Repository*, and the weekly *Advocate and Journal*, left him many hours in which he was keenly conscious of a mental weariness, increased rather than diminished by this sort of reading. He turned once more, then, to the chief favorite of his youth, and, finding in his little daughter a never-wearied auditor, he read her the plays of Shakespeare. For the evening readings which were inevitable, and took place after the child was in bed, his wife, the choice being left to her, always demanded "any thing but Shakespeare"; but Kitty was enchanted. An admirable reader, a good mimic, he made the dramas real to her in a way which solitary

perusal at her age could never have done; but the heavy volume was, nevertheless, pored over by her afterward until she knew it half by heart, and numbered her favorite characters among the inhabitants of the dream world in which she lived as she sat hemming her sheets or learning painfully to knit and darn when the days of her father's imprisonment were ended.

When the holidays came round this year they brought another notable increase to Kitty's stock of mental furniture, and one which led directly to a still further enlargement of her spiritual experience. Among her gifts on New Year's day was an illustrated copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which the child took an immense but bewildering pleasure. She sat reading it one night when bedtime came, but repeated summons failing to rouse her attention, her mother finally came behind her and bent over her shoulder to see what she was about before leading her upstairs.

"So you like Christian, do you?" she said chatting while the undressing and hair-brushing were going on.

"Yes," answered Kitty, "but I don't understand it all. What burden was that he had on his back?"

"The book is an allegory," explained her mother. "It describes what goes on in the soul as if it took place outwardly in daily life. Christian is man himself—all men. His burden was his sins, which he got rid of, as we all get rid of ours, by repenting and beginning a new life."

Kitty opened wide eyes. "All men? That means women too, and children. Have I got a burden on my back? Have you?"

"I had," said her mother. "And you have, because you are not yet a Christian."

"I never felt it," said Kitty. "How can I get it off?"

"You must be converted," said her mother, "and then you must join the church."

"But I don't know how."

"Well," said her mother, "next week the protracted meeting begins. When people are anxious about their sins and want to be converted they go to the revival meetings, and when the invitation is given for sinners to come forward they go up to the altar to be prayed for. And usually they are converted then. I wasn't, but father and Becky were. I think you are hardly old enough to try it yet awhile."

"But I am," said Kitty, whose fancy was already busy with the pack on her back, "and I shall."

"Father," she said the next Monday night, when he got up at the stroke of seven o'clock to put on his long round cloak; Kitty had run under it as usual to feel the dark and have her usual romp—"father, can't I go to meeting to-night?"

"Why, I suppose so," he answered, "if mother is willing. But it will be rather late to keep your eyes open."

So Kitty went to her first revival meeting—the only one to which her own good pleasure ever led her. The memory of the long, low basement room, lighted by ill-smelling lamps fastened to the square wooden posts which supported the ceiling, and filled with people standing in the aisles and sitting on the benches, remained with her long afterward like a bad dream. Her father left her with Aunt Rebecca in a seat near the inclosed platform one step higher than the floor, which it was customary to call the altar, and which he himself entered to join the minister, the trustees, and other exhorters who were already there. To the preliminary sermon Kitty paid small attention, her mind being bent, according to its usual fashion, upon her own thoughts. Her burden—her sins—she must rid herself of them. As sins they troubled her but little, perhaps because they were not in reality very heinous. As she reviewed her past she had said to herself: "I told mother a story the day I was late from school, because I went home with Sue Thomas when she pretended she had a doll that talked. But.

I took it back the next morning. And I don't get up when I am called ; but I don't think of any thing else, unless it's a sin to be a tomboy and race so in the street."

As a burden, however, they appealed strongly to her imagination, and, with the straightforward simplicity which was natural to her, she had resolved to act without delay on her mother's instructions. The sermon ended and a hymn was sung—it was "Come, ye sinners, poor and needy"—and Kitty's father started it in his full, pleasant baritone voice. Then the usual call was made for sinners to come forward to the altar and the "anxious-seat." Now was Kitty's time. To the lively surprise of Aunt Rebecca, who was not in her confidence, the little girl got up, and, slipping out of the seat, joined the kneeling "mourners" at the railing. Her father did not see her at first, and when he did he also experienced an astonishment which, if it was on the whole pleasant, was not, at least in its earliest moments, entirely unmixed. The child was, in effect, too small fry to get much attention where there were so many of her elders bent on the same errand with more emotional seriousness, if with no more unquestioning faith. She kneeled beside a weeping woman and listened attentively to the advice and exhortations addressed her by Moses Hicks, the fat grocer, from whose close proximity Kitty involuntarily recoiled. But she got up at last when the meeting was over, not only without any interior satisfaction, but with an ill-defined dissatisfaction which deepened into positive self-disgust when, after walking home in silence between her silent companions, she heard her father say to her mother, sitting by the lamp with the evening paper :

"Katharine went forward to-night."

Her father seldom called her Katharine, except when she had been naughty and he was about to reprove her ; and now, though she felt the absence of all minatory intention, the sound of the unfamiliar

name only increased her disagreeable self-consciousness. She would not meet the inquiring eye turned upon her, and when later her mother asked in a softer tone than usual, as she tucked her between the blankets, "Well, Kitty, are you a Christian now?" the little girl answered shortly, "Don't talk about it, mother! I'll tell you another time."

The question was repeated the next afternoon as they sat alone at their sewing, Kitty in her little arm-chair at her mother's side.

"Mother," she answered, "there was a woman beside me, and Moses Hicks came to talk to her. He asked her if she was sorry for her sins, and she said she was. Then he told her that all she had to do was to believe that Christ died for her—'lay right hold of it by faith' was what he said—and they would be pardoned. And she cried and groaned, and he talked and prayed, and by and by she shouted and said she 'saw the bright spot' and felt happy and was saved. And so did other people. But why did they? I believed all that and I felt just the same as ever. I didn't want to cry or to shout or any thing. So they said I wasn't converted and would have to try once more. But I will never do that again."

"I tried that way a good many times," replied her mother, "but it wouldn't answer. I thought you were too much like me for that, but there's no knowing beforehand."

"How too much like you?" asked Kitty. "You have got your burden off, haven't you?"

"Ah!" said her mother, "it was never easy for me to believe what I could not see. When I was young the other girls used to call me Thomas Didymus, because I would never take any thing on trust."

"How was it, then, that you were converted?" persisted Kitty.

"Well, it was after the first baby died. Grandmother Danforth was a Methodist, and after we were married father and I used to go to church to please

her. I didn't care much where I went. My father had been an Episcopalian, but after his death mother went back to the Presbyterians. All our folks down in Orange County have always been the bluest sort of Calvinists. But I never could accept that doctrine of election. I don't want any salvation that isn't free to every body on the same terms. Well, after Johnny died your father was in despair, and one of the members told him it was a judgment on him because he had begun to stay home Sundays to play with the baby instead of going to church. So he made up his mind to attend the next revival meeting, and he was converted the first time he went forward. So was Becky; but she isn't like me, and she had always a very tender conscience. I went and went, but it was no use. I was like you. I said, 'I believe all that already,' and I felt no change at all. But one night when they had all been praying for me, and I had been thinking of it until I fell asleep, I woke up and found the room all bright with the light that came from the word 'Unbelief,' written on the wall at the foot of the bed in letters of fire. Then I saw that really I had never believed at all. And at once belief came to me and I was converted."

"Mother," asked Kitty after a long pause, "do you think the word was really there, or did you dream it?"

"I am not sure," replied her mother. "Perhaps I was only half-awake at first, and mixed up a ray of moonlight with my dream. But there was a new light in my mind, at all events, and the next morning the very sun seemed to shine brighter, the grass was greener, and all things looked new. And since then I have really from my heart believed."

"Believed what?"

"How can I tell you? The creed I learned when I was little—'I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son,' and the rest of it."

"I never learned that," said Kitty. "But I believe it."

"Yes," replied her mother, "just as you would believe the moon is made of green cheese, if you had always been told so. That isn't saving faith."

"What is?" asked Kitty.

"I don't know—at least I can not describe it. For my own part, I think people have to wait until their time comes for it, and then God sends it, if they ask it, in the way that suits each one best."

"Well, said Kitty, after a long silence, "I know one thing. What you just told me made me think of it. When I went to church with Mag Bannan last Christmas she told me, when we came out, that what I saw up at the other end of the church was Jesus Christ himself, and I believed her. I felt so strange —as if God were not away off in heaven, but right there."

"He is everywhere," said her mother. "But don't talk about Mag Bannan and her church. Church indeed! A nest of papists! I wish you had never set your foot inside it."

"Papists!" said Kitty, pondering. "That wasn't the name. Mag said they were Catholics. Yes, and she said we were heathens because we don't keep Christmas. Why don't we! I should think folks would like to keep the Lord's birthday."

"So they would, if they knew when it was. But the Bible doesn't tell, and nobody is going to take the word of that corrupt church about it. And, Kitty, we won't talk about that at all. You must wait until you are older."

"Very well," acquiesced the child. "But go on and tell me something else. What did you mean about Aunt Rebecca? What is it to have a tender conscience?"

"Kitty," said her mother, "you are like the fool to-day. You ask questions that the wise man can not answer. I will tell you a little story. When Becky and I were children mother lived away down near the river, and the sloops landed just in front of our door

One day when they were unlading one a box of lemons broke open and some of the lemons rolled about in the dirt. Your Uncle Tony and Becky and I each picked up one. Tony and I ate up ours, but Becky pulled a long face as soon as she had hers in her hand, and went back in-doors and sat down, thinking. Then she came out and put her lemon back just where she found it."

"She was afraid of stealing," said Kitty. "And you were not?"

"They were dirty," answered her mother, "and I suppose I thought nobody would care about picking them up. And I don't even remember thinking about it until I saw what Becky did. That is a tender conscience—to be quick to know what is wrong, and not wait for some one else to show you."

"But I wish she had got her lemon," said Kitty. "She looks so sober always—as if she never had any thing she wanted. It would have been nicer if you had put yours back, too, and then somebody had come and given you each an orange instead. That's the way it is in the stories. I suppose Aunt Rebecca always feels sorry because she hasn't any little boy or girl. When I am big I mean to have a house of my own, and I hope none of my children will die. I should like a whole lot of them."

"Remember the maid with the milk-pail," said her mother, laughing. "Perhaps you'll change your mind when you are older. And, anyway, it takes two to make bargains of that sort."

CHAPTER III.

DESPITE her aspiration for "a lot of children" in the future, Kitty was by no means eager for childish society in the present. Full of health and vigor, she delighted in active sports which called her muscles into play, in much the same way that a kitten does; but she threw herself into them with so much ardor that their zest was soon exhausted and she once more ready for repose.

"Kitty," said her mother once, "does all she does with all her might. When I insist on her sewing she sets every stitch neatly and exactly, although, to be sure, she does not set a great many. She runs until there is not a dry thread on her, and when she has a book she is deaf and blind to every thing beside."

The child often uttered a wish for the brother and sister whose names were so familiar to her, but whose faces she had never seen, with an indefinable conviction that had they lived they would have been more interesting than the small companions whom she knew. But she belonged already to the race of the solitary, and would have found herself alone, no matter how close and intimate her home surroundings might have been. The love of reading does not necessarily tend to that result—often, indeed, it is an eminently social passion, leading on the "love me, love my dog" principle, to those lasting friendships built on a community of tastes. But to Kitty, although as yet she did not know it, books were interesting and useful chiefly in the capacity of keys, unlocking to her that interior world, already so much more entertaining than the world without, and so much better known,

although still so full of trackless mysteries. Her parents would gladly have seen her more companionable, but so many of the children whom she met in church and Sunday-school shared the sad experience of little Dolly Roberts, the minister's daughter, when she came in her best frock, carrying the big wax doll which, to her thinking, had been the most valuable result of the last donation-party, that Kitty's solitude within her own doors was in the end left practically unbroken.

"That is a nice doll," she said when Dolly came in smiling, with the precious burden in her arms. "My father bought it for you, and Aunt Rebecca dressed it. She can make beautiful things—bead purses, and mice out of apple-seeds, and elephants out of cotton and canton-flannel. She made the one I brought to the donation. I had two like that last year, one in trowsers and jacket and one in a pink frock. I liked Tommy best, but I left him in the sun and his head melted, and mother burned him up. And Maggie I took to bed with me, and she fell out and broke, so she went into the stove, too."

"And haven't you any now?" asked compassionate Dolly.

"Oh! yes," said Kitty, dragging out a large one of home manufacture. "This is Polly Hopkins. She is made of rags, and father painted her head and face. I like her best of all. To-day is too nice for dolls. Come out on the back stoop and swing, and then we'll play tag in the yard and have a game of ball. I have a splendid big rubber ball."

"Ball is for boys," said Dolly. "Let us stay here and play house."

"No," protested Kitty, "I hate dolls when the sun shines. They are only good for rainy days. When I can't go out, and I am tired of reading, I take Polly up in the garret and make a lot of little ones out of rags and pretend they are my children, and I am very poor and must work hard to get them something to eat."

"That isn't a nice play at all," objected Dolly. "I always make believe to be very rich, with a nice big house, furnished like Captain Livingston's, and not have to move every two years."

"Go up stairs now, Kitty," admonished her mother, "and play as Dolly wishes." And she added, whispering in the child's ear: "You must be polite when you have company."

"Very well," said Kitty; "give us an apple and a cooky, and I will get out my tea-set and keep house."

The garret was Kitty's favorite indoor play-room. One half of it, stretching out under the steeply sloping roof to the eaves at the back was unfloored, and Kitty had a wholesome yet not altogether unpleasant dread of the dark spaces between the great beams which separated it from the ceiling of the room below.

"If we should go in there," she said to Dolly, pausing to look over the low railing which separated it from her own domain, "I suppose we'd fall all the way through—into the cellar, perhaps."

The other half was higher, and the great brick chimney which came through at one end, and in the space behind which Kitty kept her box of toys, was usually warm. A swing hung from one of the rough brown beams, and cobwebs festooned them all. Here and there old-fashioned gowns depended from iron hooks, and on one was the great rag-bag from which the little girl drew her impromptu babies.

"It isn't very clean," objected dainty Dolly, prudently mindful of her Sunday frock.

"No," responded Kitty, "but I'll dust the floor by the middle window, and you can have my stool. Here, I'll open it, because it is so warm to-day." And she lifted and propped up with a stick the single sash, which swung inward at the level of the floor.

So long as the cake and apple lasted all went well, but when the monotony of "how-do-you-dos" and "good-bys" could no longer be varied by real feast-

ing Kitty grew weary of it, and proposed an investigation of the contents of an old trunk on which she had been sitting. Dolly, nothing loth, consented. At first sight it seemed full of dusty ledgers and old papers, with an occasional black spider skurrying out of the sudden, unwelcome daylight; but Kitty's hand, rummaging well down, presently fell on something which felt more promising.

"Here are two story-books," she said, her practiced eye running rapidly over the well-worn pages of *The Monastery* and *The Abbot.* "This must have been mother's trunk," she added, looking at the E. F. in brass-headed nails which adorned the rough hair lid; "I suppose they have been here ever since before she married father. You can have one and I'll take the other."

"No," said Dolly; "I can't read very well, and I don't like to any way. I came here to play."

"Well, then," said Kitty, with a ready adaptability to what seemed to be required by circumstances, "you be the mother and take both the dolls, and I'll be the father and go down to the mill. You can call me when dinner is ready."

And down she sat on the floor, and was soon so far away in the company of Halbert Glendinning and the White Lady of Avenel that poor Dolly, finding her insensible to all appeals, at last went down stairs in just displeasure, and, meeting nobody in the sitting-room, put on her bonnet and walked home to tell her doleful adventure. Mrs. Danforth, coming out of class-meeting, met the little one at the parsonage stoop and tried to persuade her to go back and stay to tea.

"No," persisted offended Dolly, "Kitty has a book and don't want me; and if she doesn't, I'm sure I don't want her."

Mrs. Danforth found her daughter still on the garret floor beside the window.

"What have you done with Dolly?" she said, taking away the book.

"Nothing," said Kitty. "We are playing house. Where is she? She was sitting here just this minute."

"Kitty! Kitty!" lamented her mother, "I don't know what to do with you. You offend all the children now; what will you do when you grow up? Dolly went home an hour ago, and says she doesn't want to come again."

"Well," replied Kitty, with a cheerful air of resignation, "I don't think I care much."

"But that is the worst of all," expostulated her mother. "You ought to care. It is selfish to be so wrapped up in one's own pleasures as to forget every body else."

"I wish I didn't," said Kitty penitently, "for I don't like to see you look so sorry. But I can't help it. That book is lovely, mother, and here is another that looks like it. I found them in that little hair trunk with brass nails." Mrs. Danforth glanced down at the volume in her hand, and at the other which the child picked up from the floor, and her face lighted up with a smile of pleased recognition.

"I thought they were lost," she said. "I had them when I was a girl. Yes, Sir Walter Scott is always pleasant, but *Ivanhoe* is better than either of these."

And the two went down-stairs together with the recovered treasures, their little misunderstanding quickly hidden under the bond of a common sympathy, a mutual pleasure.

The company of her elders on the rare occasions when there was a social gathering in the house was far more agreeable to this little girl than that of her equals in age. Like most children brought up in the society of intelligent adults, her curiosity and interest were more awakened by the topics discussed among them than by the vapid and idle prattle current among little folks. With children she was an innovator and a leader, either inciting them to noisy and romping plays which usually brought her into disgrace as the efficient cause of torn frocks and broken chairs, or filling

their ears with tales drawn partly from her reading, partly from her imagination, which, when repeated, sometimes made their parents shake their heads, with mingled surprise and disapprobation. "Company to tea," however, was a somewhat rare occurrence in Kitty's home. In her heart of hearts her mother was as little gregarious in her tastes as the child promised to be, and neither paid visits nor received them with such frequency as would have pleased her husband. Once a year, on his birthday, there was a ceremonial gathering of all his own relatives. Grandmother Danforth came, a smiling, kind old lady, with a false front under her cap, and red, youthful lips, although all her teeth had been gone these thirty years. But she was a frequent guest at all times, and so was Aunt Anne, and, though not so often, cross Uncle Horace, whom Kitty disliked because he fretted so at home when she went down to make a visit, and whom her mother was not fond of, "because," she said, "two or three times he has joined the church when he was very sick, but as soon as he gets well he says he was out of his head when he did it, and stays away again."

Then, too, Uncle John snatched an evening from his law papers, and brought his stately wife, whom Kitty regarded with a certain awe, eying with respect her heavy satins and fine laces, admiring her large, red-brown eyes, and speculating much on the prophetic significance of the "widow's peak" of dark auburn hair which grew so low down on her smooth, broad forehead. They came but seldom except on formal invitation; for Aunt Mary belonged to a family of rich Scotch brewers with Presbyterian views, who rather looked down on Methodists, and Uncle John went with her to church, although, to his own great surprise and somewhat scornful amusement, he had recently been notified of his election as one of the vestrymen of the solitary Episcopalian church of the city. He was serving his term, too, in the State Assembly, and was much occupied and working hard,

being already conscious of failing health and the necessity of making betimes all possible provision for the little lads, Kitty's only cousins.

In addition to this gathering there was always a church tea-party in the course of each winter after the revival—a large one, when Mrs. Danforth filled her square parlor and her long sitting-room, determined, as she said, "to get it all over at once, and done with." Those were great occasions to Kitty, both in preparation and in actual occurrence. They involved the labor of days, during which the kitchen was full of the stoning of raisins, the beating of eggs, the application of frosting, the boiling of ham, and the roasting of an immense turkey. More delightful than all, this was the period for the annual production of Mrs. Danforth's *chef-d'œuvre* in the culinary line—her famous preserves of whole Spitzenberg apples, cored and pared, and standing each one a rosy-white island in a lake of transparent amber syrup. Kitty was her father's child in her fondness for sweets and savory viands, and was not at all of her mother's mind when she heard her say, as sometimes she did, that for her part she could make a satisfactory meal with nothing on the table but "a loaf of bread and a salt-cellar." A mistress of the theory and practice of cookery, and in the special line of preserving and pickling one of the model housewives of her generation, she yet regarded it, on ordinary occasions, rather more in the light of a necessary but deplorable concession to man's weakness than was altogether desirable. But when the "members" and the minister were coming she spared neither labor, expense, nor skill to make the occasion notable.

On this snowy February afternoon, the mid-day meal having been dispatched with less than usual ceremony, and Kitty's hair rebraided aud tied with her Sunday ribbons of brown lute-string, she had donned her blue merino and her dainty bib apron of dotted Swiss, and by two o'clock was standing at the

parlor window watching for the first arrivals. There was no danger of any failures, although the air was thick with falling flakes, and the front steps rapidly piled up again with the dry, white powder after each application of Hannah's untiring broom. Mrs. Danforth was in her chamber, putting the finishing touches to her toilet of dove-colored cashmere with collar and cuffs of "real thread," but Aunt Rebecca had just come down in striped silk, and the ugly head-dress of black lace and purple ribbons which she preferred, as more youthful than a cap, and serving equally well the purpose of hiding her rapidly thinning hair. She came and sat down in one corner of the long hair-cloth sofa, opposite the mahogany bookcase with glass doors and thin, spindling legs, which stood beside the mantle-piece, and at once unfolded the velvet slipper she was embroidering with steel beads.

"You'd better get your sampler, Kitty," she advised, "and try to be a good girl this afternoon. Speak when you are spoken to, but don't keep asking questions."

"Father says," replied Kitty, turning round from the window, "that little girls would never learn any thing if they didn't ask questions."

"They should choose the right time and place for them, though," said her aunt, "as Paul told the women in his letter to the Corinthians."

"How was that?"

"Why, if they want to learn any thing, he tells them to keep silence in the churches and ask their husbands about it at home."

"In our church," objected Kitty, "the women talk whenever they want to, except in sermon time. And if you had waited to ask your husband about things you wouldn't know any thing yet."

"Oh, well!" said Aunt Rebecca, laughing, "I don't always agree with Paul. That is one of the places where we differ. When you are alone with us, it is in order for you to ask as many questions as we

can answer, but when company comes they will prefer talking to each other. Run to the door, Kitty! There is Mrs. Deyo. She is always the first-comer. It is only half-past two, and Eliza not down stairs yet!"

The room rapidly filled up with ladies, who, after going up into the spare chamber to lay off their wraps and put on the caps which they had brought neatly pinned up in handkerchiefs, came and sat down in cheerful, chatty groups, retailing household gossip such as women love, while their hands were busy with their sewing. A late-comer brought a scrap of news gleaned, she said, from the new *Advocate and Journal* that came while she was tying her bonnet, which caused some spirited comment. A former minister, whose pastoral term had not long expired, had seceded from the Methodist ranks and joined the Baptists, by whom he had been warmly welcomed and promptly installed in a prominent and wealthy New York church.

"So Tom Armiton is gone at last!" had been Mrs. Danforth's exclamation. "I knew he was uneasy, and I suspected he had a hankering after the loaves and fishes."

"Come, come, now, Sister Danforth," wheezed fat Mrs. Deyo in her asthmatic voice, "we must be charitable to every body. Brother Armiton 'ad 'is doubts about hinfant baptism these many years. 'E told me so when I wanted 'im to sprinkle my sister Susan's Tommy when 'e was down with scarlet fever."

"There are always plenty of reasons when uneasy people want to make a move," said Aunt Polly Gould; "and this time the rolling stone will gather more moss than if it had staid where the Lord put it in the first place."

"It does seem a pity," chimed in another, "that there should be so many different churches. We all want our liberty, but we can't take it more than once without scandalizing all our neighbors. It was a

long time before I could make up my mind to join anywhere, just on that account."

Here conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the minister's wife. She apologized for her tardy advent by a humorous and yet pathetic account of her day's labor in her underground railway office. A thorough-going Abolitionist in the days when to be so was not to court popularity, her kitchen, wherever temporarily lodged by the itinerating system, had long been known as a place of rest and refreshment for runaway slaves on their journey to the Northern frontier. She was a heavy woman, in the neighborhood of forty, with a muddy complexion, cheeks that promised to be baggy and unpleasant in later years, black, piercing eyes, and square, uncompromising jaws. She had lodged a whole family this time, she said—father, mother, and a pickaninny.

"Not a whole family, either," she added, "for the poor things left two more in 'ole Virginny.' Left 'em with a Methodist class-leader, too. If the Lord don't take vengeance on this sort of thing pretty soon I'm all out in my calculations. And if the next General Conference doesn't cut all connection with the Methodist Church South, why, I know two people who will cut their connection with it in very short order."

A look ran round the circle at this revolutionary announcement.

"Which way will they go in that case?" asked Mrs. Danforth. "Follow Tom Armiton to the Baptists, or strike out a line of their own?"

"So he's gone, has he?" responded Mrs. Norton—"wallowing back into the mire of ordinances! No, no meddling with forms and ceremonies for me. I was brought up to believe, with good old John Wesley, that slavery is the sum of all villainies, and the Baptists are as deep in that mud as the Methodist Episcopalians are in the mire. There are more ways than one to climb out of a ditch."

Kitty had been sitting, deeply interested, at Mrs.

Norton's knee. She did not admire her—she had, in fact, one of her instinctive half-aversions for her—but she liked her graphic way of describing a situation, and had a profound respect for her charity toward the slaves. She got up now to admit the minister himself, a tall thin elderly man, with a high but narrow forehead and mild eyes, whom Kitty was beginning to be fond of. He came earlier than the other men, whose business detained them until the supper-hour, and brought his only son, a lad some five or six years older than Kitty, who had now passed her tenth birthday. Richard, a well-grown, rather sullen-looking, but intelligent lad, in a blue roundabout and gray trowsers, immediately adjourned, on the little girl's invitation, to the kitchen, where she was to keep the biscuits from burning while Hannah laid the tables in the dining-room. The children were fast getting to be friends: for, the boy's reading and other pleasures being greatly curtailed and otherwise interfered with at home, he had of late fallen into the habit of frequently dropping in at Mr. Danforth's, where books were more plenty, and the new magazine issued by the great Methodist publishing-house, full of wood-cuts and secular reading, came regularly every month.

"Richard," Kitty said to him as they stood by the kitchen-window looking at the snow piling up in the yard, "how kind your mother is to those poor black people!"

But Richard was by no means so sympathetic as might have been expected.

"Yes," he said shortly, "she is—so kind that I sometimes wish my father and I were runaway niggers. There will be a runaway of another sort some of these days, if she don't look out."

And then, his cloudy eyes brightened at the sight of Kitty's astonished face. "See here, Kitty," said he, drawing a memorandum-book from his pocket, "I'll show you a picture I made of the people she had in the kitchen this morning. They are a sorry lot, and I'm glad our folks do what they can for them."

The sketch was a spirited one, and Kitty examined it with a pleased and respectful admiration which soon smoothed the boy's ruffled plumage.

"I don't mean all I said just now," he went on. "I think my mother is an excellent woman."

"Why, of course," said Kitty. "Every body's mother is good. I heard father say that no minister's wife had done so much for the poor of the neighborhood. And then think of the slaves and what she does for them!"

But here again she had touched the wrong chord.

"Kitty," said the boy, "my mother adores slaves out of pure perversity. When they belong to other people she pities them immensely, but she is a born slave-holder herself. She rules my father with a rod of iron. I go out-doors and swear when I can't stand any longer the sight of the way she imposes on him. I told him this afternoon that if it were not for him I would cut my stick and be off. The poor man had to come out of his study to-day to sew the buttons on his shirt before he could put it on; and as for mine—"

He stopped short again, reading the result of his revelations so unmistakably in Kitty's expanding eyes that the touch of his mother in him which made him so keen a critic of her faults, and which included a sense of the humorous side of things even quicker than her own, brought him to a laughing pause.

"You think I'm a nice boy, don't you?" said he. "Ah, well! I'm very fond of my mother, all the same, and I know that little mouth of yours can shut close over what I say to you. If you will sit up there on the table by the window I'll make a picture of you in that pretty white apron."

This occupation busied them until tea-time, and Richard, whose candor was less indiscriminate than Kitty's and reserved for her alone, took her yet further into his confidence.

"I am going away next year," he said, "to my

father's brother, who is a doctor and lives in Boston. I have made up my mind to be a surgeon. Mother wants me to be a minister, but I hate the very thought, and Uncle Dick, who has no children, has offered to take me in hand. One of these days I shall come back here and see whether you look like this still." And he held up what Mrs. Danforth, coming out just then to speak to Hannah, thought a capital likeness. She asked for it, but Richard put it in his pocket.

"Some day," he said, "I will make another, but this one I will keep."

There were two tables to-night, each running the whole length of the dining-room. At the head of one presided Mrs. Danforth behind the tea-service; at the other was Aunt Rebecca with a steaming coffee-urn beside her. Opposite her sat Mr. Danforth with Mrs. Norton at his right, and the minister occupied the foot of Mrs. Danforth's table. Kitty passed up and down with a tray, helping Hannah to wait on the guests.

"Tea or coffee?" she asked in a soft little voice at Mrs. Norton's elbow as soon as the bustle of taking seats after the blessing invoked by the minister was fairly over. That lady had been sniffing with a displeased air from the moment of her entrance into the room. Now she said, rather crossly:

"I never take intoxicating drinks. Bring me a cup of tea."

Mr. Danforth lifted his scanty eyebrows.

"That sounds mysterious, Sister Norton," said he. "Suppose you tell us what it means while Kitty goes for your tea and Sister Livingston's coffee. We call ourselves temperance people here."

"I was blind myself once," was the reply. "I could no more get along without my strong coffee, twice every day, than any other drunkard can without his favorite dram. It is simply poison to the nerves. I have never allowed an ounce of the stuff in my house since I made up my mind about it, and I preach a crusade against it wherever we go."

"And Brother Norton?" inquired Mrs. Livingston, who was quietly stirring sugar into her cup of the denounced beverage. "I thought he seemed to enjoy it greatly when I offered him some the other day."

Mrs. Norton's forehead contracted and her square jaws set close.

"There are many people in this world," she said, "who can't be trusted to know what is good for them, no matter how often it is pointed out."

Kitty, whose quick ears had caught the last remarks, and whose mind was still full of Richard's disclosures, ran off without further delay to Aunt Rebecca, from whom she presently brought the cup of coffee which she set down, unasked, at the minister's elbow, receiving from him in return one of those patient smiles which were the secret of her fondness for the good man.

"I suppose you want coffee too, Richard?" she said, coming last of all to her friend. "I didn't ask your father, but just took it to him."

The boy laughed. "Well done, Kitty!" said he; "you are as quick to take a hint as my mother herself. And now fetch your own, and take this empty place beside mine."

Mrs. Norton came behind her husband's chair when supper ended. He had not yet risen, and his half-filled cup was in his hand.

"At your dram again, Mark Norton!" she said in a hard tone, audible to all who stood near.

Her husband emptied and set down his cup. Then he rose and said in his gentle way:

"My dear, I took what was given me and asked no questions, as I always do."

"There is always a devil on hand to supply folks who think that a good excuse," she retorted, brushing by in a temper already ruffled by the good-humored badinage with which her host had declined her advice on the same subject.

CHAPTER IV.

MARK NORTON, as he called himself, refusing the customary title of reverend on the same principle by which he denied that of saint to the apostles and evangelists, was, if not a philosopher, at least a man who knew how to take the minor annoyances of life philosophically. Opinions may differ as to what annoyances are minor. Many men, perhaps most men in his position, with a wife whose domineering temper was so little under control that she either could not or would not hinder its display on every provocation, would have been permanently soured and rendered profoundly unhappy. This one, after some years of mild but persistent effort to induce her to curb her temper and master her own will, had at last abandoned the struggle altogether, and taking his religion more than ever on its purely spiritual side, had in time accustomed himself to regard his domestic martyrdom in the light of a salutary discipline. But the privacy of his closet, and that almost universal confidant of tender and devout souls, his introspective diary, still bore witness to the pangs of what he called, and honestly believed, his proud and only half regenerate heart, but which his common sense occasionally insisted on recognizing as the protests of a righteous indignation.

At present his mind was much occupied with considerations touching the necessity and the justification for another of those sub-divisions which, if religious truth propagated itself like a sponge, by repeated sections, would by this time have regenerated the face of the globe. Like his wife, he had a horror of negro

slavery, which had repeatedly found voice in a protest against prolonged corporate union with unrepentant slave-holders. He had met with so many rebuffs from his superiors in the Methodist hierarchy that he had also begun to question the theory and practice of church government obtaining in that body, and was fast finding the yoke too galling for his shoulders. To-night conversation, after trickling into numerous side-channels, poured its full volume into this one, started at first by an allusion to the late secession from the Methodist ranks, and then accelerated by an item, which the minister himself read out from an evening paper, concerning the progress of Puseyism in England and the exodus to Rome of a number of Anglican clergymen. As he finished, some one asked him how he accounted for such facts in an age so enlightened and so well persuaded of the corruption of that mother of iniquities.

"To my mind, Brother Harrison," he answered, "the church which these men are leaving is not less corrupt in principle than the one to which they are going; and if it is less corrupt in practice, that is due to the moral pressure exerted on it by the dissenting bodies. Rome itself, in these days of triumphant Protestantism, is doubtless more pure outwardly than in former times."

"That is just like Mark!" interrupted his wife; "he can't say a good, hearty word of fault-finding even with the Scarlet Woman. Pure, indeed, with Father Mike's ear at one hole in the confessional and daughter Biddy's mouth at the other! For my part, if I could shut up all the rum-shops, free all the slaves, and drive every Romish priest out of the country, I should begin to think the millennium was at hand."

"I said outwardly pure, my dear," responded her long-suffering spouse. "As to the English Church, it was the unwilling mother of our own. It erred by not casting off every rag of popery in the outset, and

ours has done the same. What need have we of bishops when we all belong to the royal priesthood?"

"Well," said Mr. Danforth, on whose knee Kitty had, as usual, perched herself, "John Wesley found that church good enough to live and die in, and I sometimes wish the rest of us had followed his example. The thing is done now, and I find myself well enough off where I am. But I don't want to see any more schisms; there are more than plenty now."

"I was saying that this afternoon," said a woman's voice at his elbow. "I declare, when I was first converted, I would have gone into my poor old mother's church, if there had been one in the town. But there wasn't, and so I joined the Methodists because they were the handiest. But I have a great deal of sympathy for Brother Armiton."

"That is pretty much the history of all of us, I suppose," rejoined the minister. "Our hearts are warm then, and the easiest thing is to follow our friends without looking too close at the road they are taking. Afterward we stumble over a good many stones of offense as we go along. For my part, I find the papacy the root and ground of error, because it puts the word of man in the place of the Word of God, and I find popery living and thriving in our own hierarchy to an extent which to me is growing intolerable."

"But, man," objected Moses Hicks, who had just sold out his grocery as a preliminary step to removing, with his wife and young family, into the neighborhood of the theological school where he proposed to fit himself for the ministry, "there must be some rule and order in the church of God. We can not all preach, we can not all ordain. A head is needed for every body."

"A blockhead is better than none for some folks," sweetly remarked Mrs. Norton. "A head that ordains slave-holders and lives by the price of flesh and blood might as well be cut off and done with."

"For my part," said her husband, "I don't object so much to what a hierarchy does, as to the very fact of its existence; and as for ordination, I remember the time when I thought my right to preach the Gospel had been given me by Bishop Ames, but to-day I should think my license very worthless, if that were the root of it."

"See here, dominie," said Mr. Danforth, "neither you nor I believe that God appointed the present legislature, nor that every law they may pass this winter is certain to be strictly binding on the conscience. Yet both of us, being good citizens, propose to obey them. To my mind there is the same necessity for law and order, a judge and an executive on one hand and obedience on the other, in religious matters as in the affairs of state."

"If Luther had been of your mind," replied Mr. Norton, "we should have had no Reformation. I hear that argument every year at Conference, and I see slavery spreading like a upas-tree and no protest made, because Methodism is growing fat and comfortable under the shadow of it."

"O, well!" said Moses Hicks, "ain't you putting it a little too strong? When things come to such a pass of corruption as Luther found them in, it is time to make a move. But you can't mean to assert any thing like that of our communion? You don't stand alone; we all know what is in the air. But I confess I understand better men who act like Armiton, because they stick at doctrines, than people like you, who claim to be as firmly a Methodist in your belief as on the day you were ordained."

"Yes; but as I find myself bound in conscience to refuse fellowship with open sinners who justify their sin, so I must also protest against all authority except that of God's written Word."

"What do you say to that Word when it tells you the church is the pillar and ground of truth?" asked Kitty's father. The little girl had been follow-

ing the conversation, which had taken a turn new in her experience, with an interest doubtless greater than her comprehension ; but Richard, who had been standing near the astral lamp, looking at some engravings in a magazine, came up now, and, touching her on the shoulder, proposed an adjournment to the dining-room.

" How sick I am of all that endless talk which leads to nothing ! " he said when they had seated themselves, with Kitty's box of dominoes between them. " You don't hear so much of it, I suppose, for you actually looked interested. As for me, I am almost washed away in the constant flood of it that goes on at home."

" No," said Kitty, " our folks talk about religion, but not that way. When all the children were getting converted this last revival father said a good deal to me about my soul. I would like to join the church, but I don't feel as the rest do, and they won't have me."

" The minister's son and the deacon's daughter are the black sheep of the flock," said Richard, laughing. " I don't exactly know how they account for it in my case, but your trouble, every body agrees, is that you read too much trash and have your own way more than is good for you."

" I didn't understand all they were saying to-night," said Kitty, "but I don't see why there should be so many churches."

" What I don't see," replied the boy, with sudden energy, " is why there should be any. My father talks about the Word of God. How does he know the Bible is the Word of God at all ? "

" Because it sounds true, I suppose," said Kitty. " That is how I know it."

Richard laughed.

" You have good ears," he said. " Every thing sounds true to you that your parents tell you with a sober face."

"No, it don't," answered Kitty. "At least, of course I believe all they say, but all things don't sound the same way. It is like what they give you to eat at your meals. It is all good, but you like some things better than others. Some seem to belong to me and I never forget them, but others go out of my mind as fast as they go in. What did your father mean to-night about Rome and popery?"

"The Catholic Church," replied the boy. "And that, they all agree, was the first one, and yet it is so bad that they never think of going back to it."

"I was in one once," said Kitty, "when I was very little."

"I wonder at that. Our folks would as soon see me fall into the river as go into a church of that sort."

"So would ours, I suppose. One of our hired girls took me, and they sent her away. I liked it better than ours. The girl told me all Protestants were heathen. I never forgot that."

"It sounded true, did it?" said Richard, with a laugh. "Come, let us have a game and leave the church question to our elders and betters. You will have to teach me, for wickedness of this sort isn't allowed in our house."

They were deep in their play when the bustle of dispersion began in the other room, and did not notice Richard's mother until she stood behind them. A little pack of cards, belonging to the childish game known in those days as "Doctor Busby," lay face downward on the table, and a line of dominoes stretched between the absorbed players. To the little girl's dismay, a heavy hand suddenly scattered the pieces on the floor, and then caught up the cards, while its mate administered to her partner's ear a sudden cuff which brought him to his feet with an execration, and a face so like that bent upon him that Kitty felt herself turn cold. Her cards went with a toss into the open stove.

"That is the way I serve the devil's bible wherever

I find it," said the angry woman. "As for you, my fine fellow, I'll give you a lesson on gambling to-morrow morning."

There were now two or three spectators of this scene.

"What does this mean, Kitty?" asked Mr. Danforth, whom the sound of the blow and the cry the little girl had uttered as it fell had brought to her side without delay.

"I don't know, father," she answered with a sob. "We were playing dominoes when she came in and threw my 'Doctor Busby' cards into the fire."

Mr. Danforth turned upon his guest a look in which strong impatience struggled hard with courtesy.

"I don't wonder," she said in answer to it, "that you pray in vain for this child's conversion. What business have gambling games in the house of a Christian?"

"This passes belief, woman," he retorted, his anger rising to a level with her own. "When I want advice about my child it is not at your hands I shall seek it."

"James," begged his wife, laying her hand on his arm, "for pity's sake avoid a squabble before these people. They will all be coming in here, if they hear your voice. Sister Norton, pray go back into the parlor; your husband is about to lead in prayer. I will attend to these children."

Her voice, quiet and cold, brought her guest to a sense of ill-behavior which sobered her at once. She made a brief apology for her hasty zeal, and the party broke up without more than half a dozen becoming aware of the unpleasant scene. Mr. Danforth came back into the parlor with a laugh after turning the key upon the last departure.

"Well, mother," said he, "I don't wonder that poor fellow is tired of bishops. He has all the pastoral crook he needs beside his own fire."

"She will have trouble with that boy, I fear," responded his wife. "He is her very spit and image."

CHAPTER V.

THE snow had ceased and a keen northwester was blowing when Mr. Danforth's guests departed; the vast dark hollow of the sky glittered with a thousand stars. Some few of the company turned up town, but the road of the majority lay for varying distances on a line with that of Mark Norton and his wife. Heavy Mrs. Deyo, lumbering along behind them through the snow, dropping her aspirates in accordance with the vocal habit of all Europe, and tacking them on again in wrong places by virtue of one peculiar to her native isle, was one of the few who had seen something of the fracas in Mr. Danforth's dining-room from a post of vantage near the parlor door. Instinct told her there was trouble brewing for the boy, and a kindness of heart which lacked nothing but tact to be exquisite, urged her to some blundering efforts to avert it.

Hannah Deyo had married Mr. Danforth's business partner rather late in life, and her genuine love for all children had never yet been gratified by the possession of any of her own. Her grief and longing were possibly as bitter as those of her scriptural homonym, but they did not invariably resemble them in being wordless. Now and again they had provoked much comment, shocked, pitying or derisive from her less outspoken female acquaintances.

Neither of the men had any definite clew to what had happened, Mr. Deyo none at all, though it was plain to Mr. Norton that something disagreeable was in the wind when Richard, immediately after being struck, came to him with a lowering, resolute face to

demand the house-key. He gave it to him without a comment, although it was against his notions of what was fitting that the boy should be alone in the streets at such an hour. Richard was almost sixteen, but his evenings had nearly all been spent in church, at home, or in social gatherings similar to the one just ended. He had broken loose from surveillance on two or three occasions within the last year, but had invariably reckoned sharply with his parents afterward.

Mark Norton's theory and practice on the score of corporal chastisement had indeed been always so far at variance that he had inflicted it but rarely, and the operation when performed by him had been of such a solemn nature, so obviously grievous and painful to the father that the boy had never borne him the slightest childish grudge. But his mother's hand was heavy, and she was an adept, moreover, in the mode of castigation known to her as tongue-lashing. She was rather proud of that member on which St. James grows eloquent, and not without some show of justice; it had an epigrammatic point, infallibly certain on occasion to find the sorest spot in any cuticle. Anger blunted it into a terrible weapon, at once mangling and incisive, but it had also its more wholesome and amusing uses. Such as it was it had gained her all her enemies, and kept those she loved best, and even those who were the recipients of what was in her circumstances lavish bounty, uneasily conscious of the sting lurking under all her benefits.

To-night Mark Norton's thoughts were wool-gathering, and he paid small heed to the voice at his side when not directly addressing him, while Mr. Deyo heard nothing in his wife's apparently pointless utterances but an ill-timed harping on a theme that began to make him feel ridiculous. He finally reduced her to silence in the midst of a spasmodic homily on the needs and diversions of children by various energetic though soundless remonstrances which she was at no loss to understand. They were the last to leave the

minister and his wife, quitting them on the corner of Westerlo Street to turn down toward the river. As the women were saying their good-nights, Mark Norton uncovered his gray hairs, and looking overhead to where Ursa Major was flashing its recognition to Cassiopœia in her chair, said in his slow, absent voice: "When I consider the heavens which are the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

"My! how the wind do cut a body's face to pieces!" said Mrs. Deyo, turning her broad back upon it as she held out her hand to him. "Them's as true words as ever was spoke, Brother Norton. What *is* the son o' man hany 'ow," she went on, laying it in good-natured fashion on Mrs. Norton's arm, "at least until 'e's grown up and got sense hinto 'im? You can't be too careful o' their feelin's even then—they mostly get hall the roughness that's good for 'em hout o' doors."

"Come, Hannah, cut it short. Let's get 'ome before we're froze stiff. To hear her preach you'd think she'd brought up a baker's dozen of 'em, wouldn't you now, Sister Norton?" Mr. Deyo hastily interposed, with a futile intention of escaping the report of the flash he saw in the latter's eyes. He had taken up his line of march while yet speaking, but too late.

"True for you, Brother Deyo," she threw after them, "but there's no hen 'll cackle louder than the one with only a china egg in the nest."

"You brought it on yourself, Hannah, you know you did," said Mr. Deyo severely when beyond hearing of any thing but her aggrieved sniffle; "if you will be such a fool as to handle a passel o' nettles like that you mustn't expect any pity when you're stung. If the dominie hasn't spunk enough to make her mind her p's and q's before folks, is it any of *your* business? You make yourself a laughing-stock, and me too, with that sort of chatter. If the Lord don't

give you children, it's because He knows well you'd be too soft to do your duty by 'em."

Whereupon, his own marital duties performed to his satisfaction, he went simultaneously into silence and the dark hall of his abiding place.

"I *wouldn't* say such things as that, Sarah," Mr. Norton remarked, mildly but unexpectedly, shortly after he and his wife had trudged on again down Pearl Street. He had almost abandoned the habit of remonstrance with her, and was besides too little acquainted as a rule with the local gossip of his successive charges to detect an especially vicious fling save by the peculiar accent it imparted to her voice. But kind, soft-hearted Mrs. Deyo, who openly regarded him as a saint under the light gained from such of his matrimonial experiences as were patent to outsiders, was one of his especial friends as well as a member of his class, and the intention of this thrust was palpable even to him.

"I don't suppose you would. Much *you'd* care what ninny took to lecturing your wife, or *who* outraged and scandalized her by such performances as went on there to-night under your very *nose* if you'd chose to look at 'em! *Deacon* Danforth, indeed! I'd deacon him out of the *church* if I had *my* way, with his gambling and his novels and play-books thrust under one's face and eyes—glorying in his own shame!"

"He is not a deacon, Sarah, as you must know," he responded in a placidly argumentative tone, after a way he had of going straight to the first directly disputable of her facts—a way which irritated her as much as most other things; "there are no deacons in the Methodist connection."

"If the *ministers* did their duty and weren't blinded by the fear of filthy lucre, there'd be no Danforths either, unless they went down in the dust and mended their ways! *Woman*, indeed!" she broke out a second later, with a sudden recurrence to a special grievance, followed by an exhalation of breath through

her nostrils which brought before her hearer's mental vision a certain swelling of the figure and a purpling of the heavy cheeks almost as plainly as though he saw them with his eyes.

"What *do* you mean, mother?" he asked, in utter perplexity. "I heard and saw nothing but what was perfectly decorous and proper at brother Danforth's this evening."

"None so blind as those that won't see," she snorted. "I saw you standing before that book-case a full half-hour before teatime."

"Well, yes; I have occasionally observed there some frivolous volumes which seem to be unfitting, at least for the little girl, but I was examining to-day a very complete Bible dictionary he has lately purchased. Besides, a man of brother Danforth's years and well-established Christian character must necessarily be allowed to judge for himself in some things. He can not be disciplined nowadays for novel-reading, though I may have neglected my duty in not approaching him on the matter privately, and in a friendly way, more seriously than has yet seemed possible to me."

"Nor yet for gambling, I suppose, even though the children of consistent Christians are dragged down to hell by it along with his own! No, nor for dancing, either! I'll warrant you've never plucked up spirit enough to tackle him with that story about his stopping in to look at the dancing at Horace Warren's on New Year's eve—on his way to watch-meeting, too! A sweet conscience he must have had to pray with afterward, but I mind well he did it just as usual!"

"I don't understand your reference to gambling, Sarah; I never heard such a whisper until now, and think your informant must be in error. As to the other matter, you can not know with what intention he stopped in on that occasion at Mr. Warren's. Mrs. Warren is his sister, and her husband unconnected with any Christian denomination."

"Let you have *your* way, Mark Norton, and you'd

find excuses for the Evil One himself—you'd lay all his misdoings to the account of a bad fall he had when he was young," she said, stopping to chuckle at her own conceit, as she was quite capable of doing in the midst of any but her most violent moods. "As to the gambling, I saw it with my own eyes, for what he permits his child is the same as though he did it himself. And the first result of it," beginning to whimper, "was an open insult to *me* before half a room full from the old man himself, and such words from Richard's mouth as made the hair on my head stand up."

The version she went on to give him of the scene which had caused her soreness was far from accurate, although it owed none of its false coloring to willful exaggeration. So much of it as related to his son troubled the father exceedingly, and he sighed.

"You must take Richard in hand yourself; he is getting beyond me," she was saying as they approached their own door. The snow lay piled almost as high as the hand-railing on the steps, save where the boy's feet had plowed a single passage through it some fifteen minutes earlier.

"By good rights he'd have had the stoop and sidewalk shoveled off by this time, before it hardened, but I know the lad of old; he's sulking in his own room. He needs a good taking down, if any child ever did, and if you do your duty you'll tan his jacket for him to-night, before you forget what it's all about."

"No danger of my forgetting, Sarah. The Lord will not, I humbly trust, afflict me too bitterly through the son of my old age, and I know He requires vigilance and fidelity at my hands as the condition of His mercies. But this is the heaviest task He lays upon me."

They passed into the narrow entrance with much stamping of feet to remove the clinging snow. At the turn of the first landing they both paused, and after a moment's hesitation, Mark Norton, groaning within himself, summoned the boy with a hasty but tremulous

call. A door opened on the floor above them and Richard responded in a voice already fuller than his father's and pitched in a much lower key. He had been angry, was angry still, but he had taken a determination which steadied him into outward composure.

"Do you want me for any thing special, father? I prefer not to come down again to-night."

Mrs. Norton took up the word before her husband was ready. She was very autocratic, and there were certain indications of choice on the part of her serfs that irritated her as too familiar speech does a turkey-cock.

"O, you *prefer*, do you, my man o' wax? *I* prefer that you shall come down and take a dressing on your knees before——"

"O, stop! Stop, mother!" interrupted the old man in a voice so agonized that even she was silenced for a moment.

Richard said nothing, but waited for his father to speak again. The parents were still in the dark but for the light striking aslant on the wall in front of them from the aperture of Richard's door. In a moment the distressed tones began again.

"Richard!"

"Well, father?"

"You hear what your mother says, my son." Then he stopped again. "I have learned from her how deeply you have sinned by your irreverence and your disobedience to our known wishes, and I can not—I fear I can not longer delay to fulfill my own duty toward you. Come down into my study."

Then there was another silence, broken presently by the boy.

"If you were alone and knew the whole case, father, I would come down for that or any thing else you please. But my mother has disgraced herself and me enough for one night, and I don't propose to give her the pleasure a second time. I have done nothing to deserve a thrashing, and I will never take another."

"Disgraced you, have I?" the woman cried, quite ungovernable now, and breaking away from the trembling hand laid on her arm, as she began to mount the stairs. "It hurt his feelings, did it, to have his ears boxed before Miss Kitty Danforth? I'll make you eat humbler pie than *that*, young man."

She was at the head of the short flight now, and her son looked at her steadily for an instant before closing the door in her face and locking it. She heard him walk away from it and draw up his chair beside the table with an unconcern that stung her to new fury. It was the first time in his life that he had braved her—almost the first that she had not carried a domestic stronghold by open force. Even the turning of the key was a fresh outrage, for beneath her roof no one but herself enjoyed the privilege of locks and bars. That the boy was in a position to intrench himself now showed that he must have entered her chamber since coming in, to possess himself of the means.

She had the wit, nevertheless, to know when she was worsted. It was not merely that she could count on no aid from her husband in breaking down a barrier slight enough in itself, but the house-walls were thin, the hour not late, and the neighbors inquisitive. No storm of rage she ever knew would have been fierce enough to make her forget facts like those. Like many proud people she found all needful justification in success. Utterly impervious to the disgrace incurred by open exhibitions of ill-temper so long as they could be made to don some plausible mask, she was not only abnormally thin-skinned under defeat, but set uneasily in the wrong by it. Not a soul was ever suffered to behold her in humiliation, nor could she contemplate herself with equanimity until the balance had been somehow readjusted. She stood, morally collapsed and breathing hard before Richard's door for a brief space, silently registering her resolutions for the morrow, before she turned to re-descend the stairs.

Nevertheless, being a passionate but not vindictive woman, and not incapable of mastering the obvious lessons taught by new experience, she came down the next morning in a milder frame of mind. It was Richard's daily duty to put all things in readiness for her to prepare breakfast, and she expected to find him sitting by the fire, occupied as usual with his lessons. She would make no immediate reference to what had passed, and restore peace by silent concessions of a sort which should put him tacitly in the wrong. She was a skillful tactician in more than one sort of domestic warfare, and had more than once stooped to strategy in the early days before her sovereignty became unquestioned. But she found the dining-room windows still blocked up with snow, and the little kitchen dark and cold. She set her slippered feet full into a drift which had sifted in under the back door, which fastened only with a bolt that she found drawn. A sudden chill of fear struck to her heart before she examined further, and she went up hastily to Richard's bedroom. But she hardly needed to open the door to assure herself that he had left it long before. Her boy was gone; how, was evident enough from the tracks leading through the back yard and across the low fence separating it from a smaller one behind the church, and thence into the street; but whither, and for how long were questions it took days to settle. The mother's punishment was very bitter.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the whole this outbreak in the minister's family caused less comment than might seem possible. The father had been too recently the recipient of his son's angry confidences to be in much doubt as to the direction he had taken, though his grief over the manner of departure was hardly lessened by that circumstance. At the very first, when after a day of sore anxiety night closed in with no news save the late telegram in which Dr. Norton responded to inquiries by professing ignorance of his nephew's whereabouts, the mother's conscience threw so vivid a light on the past that she kept silent from all but tears and passionate self-pity. But the valley of humiliation, in which she never sank far enough to reach those lowest depths of self-accusation where one first touches a firm bottom, was too miry for her comfort, and by the time the second night brought news of Richard's safety, she had taken up an impregnable position elsewhere. It was her husband's fault entirely—the poor misguided child knew well that it was only a word and a blow with her and then all was over, but when Mark planted himself upon that notion of duty, the boy understood clearly that the fulfillment of it might be postponed but would not be neglected. She enlarged upon this theme until Mr. Norton's simplicity, which was great, accepted her accusation as perhaps half true, and after some quickly interrupted efforts to put the other side before her he kept silence. But his candor, being on a par with some of his other qualities, brought him so nearly to the point of blurting out the whole truth to one of his flock who

came in to make inquiries just after the reassuring news had been received, that nothing but a sudden fit of hysterics and a mysteriously opportune illness which followed hard upon it, averted the danger. Mrs. Norton did not recover from the latter until he had acknowledged the folly of bruiting about a domestic trouble so unnecessarily. The thing blew over very quietly, and the end of Mark Norton's ministry in his present charge being not far off, his wife soon held up her head as high as ever. In the spring he withdrew from the Conference and settled down as permanent pastor over a score or two of seceders from his late congregation. The flock was too poor to afford him even a salary as meager as had formerly been his lot, and to eke it out he went back to his old trade as a carpenter.

To Kitty Danforth, who often met him, tool-box in hand, and with whom he never failed to exchange greetings and to give occasional tidings of his son, there was something heroic in this action, based on a moral scruple which in her childish way she understood and shared. But the waves of the anti-slavery agitation, which had but this one personal consequence for her, came to her ears for the most part with only a confused and far-off murmur. Very little controversy on the subject took place in her hearing save that which reflected on the several schisms created by it in the Methodist ranks. Her father, immersed in affairs which were growing troublesome, regarded the slavery question as one of politics with which the churches in their corporate capacity had no concern, and her mother, whose mind was of that tenacious sort which never goes back to re-examine the reasons for a course of conduct once deliberately adopted, looked at his quiescence with entire approbation. It happened, therefore, that the girl, passing into a serious and reflective youth was thrown back upon herself and never found that outlet by which so many earnest souls then sought refuge from introspection

by a salutary plunge into practical interest in their fellows.

Brought up in such a household, it was almost inevitable that her thoughts should dwell much on religious matters, and equally so that they should take the tinge of her personality. Her aunt fell into feeble health just as Kitty was entering her teens and for a year or two the little girl watched her lapsing gradually out of a life in which she had known no nearer ties than those of daughter and sister, and seemed never to have struck deep root. In these last years she took an enduring hold on Kitty's imagination which was perhaps the strongest impression her weak vitality had ever been able to produce. After she ceased to leave her room the child used to go there voluntarily to keep her company, studying beside the window opposite which her aunt was propped in her sick chair, and glancing up now and then to meet and ponder over the look of doubt, anxiety and apprehension which seemed to her to dwell within the sufferer's large pale eyes. Once she ventured to ask her :

" Are you afraid, auntie ? "

" Afraid of what, child ? "

" Of dying ; of going to see God ? "

" No," the answer came after a pause ; " but I don't like it—I don't like it."

The child had anticipated the reply, but yet it puzzled her. The thought of God, not as Saviour, but as Creator, Father, above all as Satisfier, was taking more serious hold upon her as she grew, while at the same time all the sermons and instructions she listened to in church and at home were daily making less and less impression. What she wondered at now was why a life which had vaguely impressed her as empty, should not look forward with joy to the moment of attaining the supreme satisfaction which its faith bade it anticipate. She felt herself seized by an impotent compassion which showed itself by all the cares within her power, but was consciously mute and

helpless in presence of a dumb appeal which moved her strangely.

In school she was making a capricious and irregular progress, now studious, now idle, showing great aptitude in some directions, and in others scarcely keeping on a level with her class. Among her equals she might have been popular, but for a way, as uncomfortable for herself as it was awkward for others, of suddenly cooling in the midst of intimacies which she had probably sought with flattering ardor. But during nearly the whole of one year she abandoned herself to a strong attraction for one of her teachers, and for that period became a model of studious industry and quick obedience. Miss Falconer, a young woman of unusual cultivation and breadth of mind, and a noble and elevated beauty which had been the secret of Kitty's attraction, finding herself the object of a plainly evident yet shy passion which converted into the most diligent and docile of pupils a girl who brought with her into the class the reputation of a brilliant idler and a hopeless rebel against routine, set herself the task of gaining a more intimate knowledge of her unexpected captive.

"The girls complain," she said to her one day, "that you are too capricious—all warmth and sunshine at first, and then as they begin to grow fond of you, going back into your shell like a snail."

Kitty blushed. "I know it," she said, "and I am sorry, but I can't help it. After all, I don't see why they need complain. I must be just as unsatisfactory to them as they are to me."

"What do you mean by that?" inquired Miss Falconer.

"Oh!" said Kitty, "some faces attract me; they seem like books unread, which will tell me the things I am always wanting to know and yet never find. The girls are like the books—they tell you a lot of things, but nothing you care about. When I take a little baby that has never spoken yet, I think of how its

mother must be watching to see if, when it begins to talk, it won't remember something of what lay behind it—before it came into the world."

Her teacher laughed. "It will say the same old things," she answered: "nothing more remarkable than *goo-goo* and *dada*." And then she added, more gravely: "If it is the infinite you are seeking for you will never be happy. Nothing in this world will satisfy a heart which desires love itself and not a thing beloved."

Kitty, too, looked grave. Then in her turn she laughed.

"At any rate," she said, "it won't do any good to pretend that Mary Jones is the infinite, or for her to try to persuade herself that Kitty Danforth was just going to develop into it, and then suddenly changed her mind and shut up like an umbrella."

"No; but considering that the world is made up of Marys and Kittys, not to speak of Toms and Dicks and Harrys, it would be wiser to try to accommodate yourself to your surroundings. There is no absolute good in it, even for those whose wants are far less exacting than yours. But there is plenty to do, and more than plenty to think about; and happiness is usually thrown into the scale for those who honestly try on their own part to fill it up with duties well done. As far as I can see, it always eludes those who seek it for itself, as you seem inclined to do. This year you are working well and meeting all my wishes, but do you know what all your previous teachers said to me about you before you came into my hands?"

"I can guess," said Kitty.

"I see you can. They told me I would find you at once a torment and a pleasure, to whom work was only a sort of play and rules seemed made only to be broken."

"I never broke one deliberately," answered Kitty, "but I often forgot all about them. Some of them are so stupid! Why should one go in this door

instead of that, stand or sit in such or such a position, work out all one's examples in one way when another is easier and quicker?"

"But you conform to all my regulations, and they are just the same."

"They are yours," said Kitty, with another faint blush. Miss Falconer smiled.

"The world of school," she said, "is like the greater world outside it—made for all sorts and conditions of men, who must be governed by average rules. I dread to see you set yourself against it. It is tolerably sure to afford a moderate but adequate happiness to all who are willing to accept it and pay for it the regular price—labor and conformity. For others it has nothing."

At another time, when their conversation had reached the same end, though by a widely different route, Katharine asked if her teacher were a Christian.

"Surely!" she answered, with some surprise. "Are not you?"

"I suppose not; they tell me so at home, and so did an old friend, Mr. Norton, with whom I walked to school this morning. He said I would never be happy until I was converted."

"What do they mean by that, and what church do you attend?"

"The Methodist."

"Ah!" said Miss Falconer, "I understand."

"Yes," said Kitty. "I can not get into the state of mind that is necessary; and, worse than that, the older I grow, and the more I read and think about the matter, the more it seems to me that a church is either entirely unnecessary or that there should never have been more than one. I see no reason why we should not go straight to God without such a medium."

"Perhaps," said Miss Falconer, "one reason may be that God is a pure spirit, while we are hampered by our bodies. He has met that difficulty by sending His

Son in flesh like ours. And that answers your question as to why there should be a church. Men change and die, and there must either be a perpetual incarnation or an organization which will faithfully transmit what Jesus Christ has taught. You know what He says: 'No man cometh to the Father but by me.'"

"Yes," said Kitty, thoughtfully;" it is in the Gospel of John. But there is something else there that I find harder still: 'No man can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.'"

Miss Falconer made no direct reply. Katharine, by her invitation, was spending with her the time between Friday and Monday—a pleasure shyly longed for but never before enjoyed. Presently her teacher began anew:

"As to your idea that there should never have been more than one church, it is not far out of the way. In reality there is but one. To-morrow I will take you with me, and see if you will like it better than your own."

"I have been in a Catholic church once," answered Kitty. "An Irish girl took me when I was very small. Is it that you mean?"

"No," said Miss Falconer, "if, as I suppose, you refer to the Roman Catholic; yes, in the sense in which I understand the word. The universal church has three great branches—the Roman, which was the main trunk, but lapsed into corruption; the Greek, and the English, or, as we call it here, the Episcopalian, to which I belong."

Katharine was now past sixteen. She had made her way through considerable history, and had also read a good deal of such controversy as gets into religious journals and is discussed among people who are much in earnest and yet differ widely on a subject which is either of supreme importance or of none at all.

"These three branches," she asked—"do they all believe the same things?"

"In essentials, yes."

"But the three puzzle me as much as three hundred. Why do they separate, if they are really the same? You told me just now that a church was necessary to transmit truth faithfully, and that I understand. But when the first messenger begins to go wrong how can any one be sure the second will not, and how is one to know what is true or false in either message?"

"We have the Scriptures."

"I can not understand all I read in them," said Kitty. "And, if they are enough, why isn't it enough to read and to believe them? I have always done that, and yet my father and mother are constantly grieving because I do not join the church."

"We are getting into deep waters," said her friend, "and it is late. I think myself that the theory of an emotional conversion is a great mistake. If you had been brought up as I was you would have been baptized in infancy, taught your catechism, confirmed at the proper time, and never have doubted that you were a Christian. That is one of the most serious consequences of the schism which produced Methodism."

"You are a Christian, then," said Kitty, with a smile, "because you followed your parents; and I am not, because I am waiting to follow mine. Yet my mother thinks the church of my grandmother is all wrong, and that yours is nearly or quite as bad as the Roman Catholic itself. For me, I begin to fear I never shall belong to any. I know I never shall, unless I can find one that really answers all the questions I wish to ask. But if it turns out to be true that the very first has gone utterly astray, then I shall get on as best I can without one."

"You say 'if,'" replied Miss Falconer, "as though there were already a doubt in your mind about the matter."

"Yes," said Katharine; "but it is a doubt which

has nothing to support it except a vague sentiment which I have felt ever since I was a child." Then, recounting in a few words her recollection of her first Christmas Mass, she went on to say :

"The moonlight and the clear, starry darkness, the shadows on the snow and the silent streets, which were all new to me, are, perhaps, at the bottom of it. But the very word 'Catholic' has always given me a curious emotion ever since, as if it woke an echo within me which recalled the strange awe I felt there and urged me to return."

"That church has a mysterious fascination for many minds," said her teacher ; "yet the historical proofs of error and corruption are so strong that I have never felt inclined to doubt what I was taught at confirmation, that this attraction should be resisted as the most dangerous delusion of the evil spirit. There was one of my schoolmates who entered it just before that time, and our rector, Dr. Adams, devoted a great deal of attention to the subject on that account."

Kitty smiled. "One of our ministers told me once, when I asked some questions about it, that only the devil could have prompted them. If it be he, I fear he has a strong hold over me. But it sounds to me like the same voice which, whenever I have been idle, or disobedient, or inclined to make a false excuse, has stopped me in one direction and urged me in another. But for the fear of grieving my father and mother I should have sought instruction long ago."

"The one duty that is absolutely plain to a child," said Miss Falconer, "commanded by nature as well as by Christianity, is obedience to parents. That very fact has probably shown you that there is something dubious in your attraction."

"I have thought of that," answered Kitty. "It sounds reasonable. They used to laugh at me, when I was little, for saying that true things had a different sound from false ones. If that were absolutely true

it would be worse than foolish to send missionaries to the heathen."

On Sunday morning Kitty accompanied Miss Falconer to church. In the afternoon the latter, who had been reflecting much on the unexpected state of mind which her confidences had revealed, acted on a resolution taken the night before, by proposing a visit to the new cathedral. The city had not only rapidly increased its Catholic population, but was the center of a number of small manufacturing towns where they were so numerous that it had been made the see of a new diocese. A cathedral which had been for several years in course of erection had recently been opened for divine worship. The music was unusually good, and the church was not unfrequently visited by Protestants. Miss Falconer, who had entered it on a week-day not long before, had found her sense of fitness much offended by the decorations of the three or four side altars.

"Katharine," she said to herself, "is inclined to exaltation and ideality. This gilded-gingerbread, these wax dolls dressed in lace and satin, these tawdry artificial flowers as adjuncts of religion, will be worth all the arguments in the world to her. She is made for the simplicity and fervor of Protestantism in its highest form."

But, contrary to her expectation, Kitty drew back from the proposal, objecting the probable displeasure of her parents.

"I am glad to see," replied Miss Falconer, "that you are only a theoretic rebel. As for the rest, I will take the responsibility on myself. Your parents will approve my motive when I explain it to them. You appear to be haunted by a ghost, and the readiest way to lay it will be to show you that it is only a broom-stick dressed in rags and lighted up by moonshine. It is often better to take a bull by the horns than to run away from it."

Vespers having begun before they entered, a tour

of the building was necessarily postponed until the close of the office. The church was very large, with massive brown-stone columns, across which the afternoon light, streaming in through the high windows, lay in oblique lines of gorgeous colors. It was not well filled, and they easily found seats near the high altar. Katharine, not privy to the special intention of her companion, soon ceased to think about her, and yielded to the influence of the music and the place. As for Miss Falconer, who paid her tribute to the branch theory by a devout demeanor and a silent prayer on entering the pew, her face presently put on an expression of almost stupefaction, and her thoughts fell into a confusion which drove her laudable purpose so entirely out of her mind that they left the church without its recurring to her memory. They walked home in silence, and Katharine, who had expected some explanation of their visit, but received none, asked for it when, in the evening, they were once more alone.

"What shall I tell my father when he asks me why we went to the cathedral?" she inquired, after a long silence which threatened to remain unbroken.

"I shall have to explain it to him myself," answered Miss Falconer, with the air of one coming out of profound thought. "The fact is that I utterly forgot both you and what I meant to call to your attention."

Katharine's face lighted with a pleased smile which her companion was not slow to interpret.

"No," she replied to it, "you mistake entirely if you think I shared the attraction to which I saw that you were yielding. I have been doubting whether I ought to tell you; but the priest who read Vespers this afternoon was Edgar Adams, the clergyman who prepared me for confirmation. When I saw him incline his head as he walked past that image with its lace robe and its ugly flowers, I had no thoughts to spare for any thing but the degradation of the man

whom at your age I venerated as a saint, and who taught me to regard the temptation to go to Rome as the work of the arch-enemy of souls!"

There was a long silence, which Katharine finally broke.

"He looks good," she said, "and he looks wise. I should like to speak with him. He must have found out that he was in error. But as to changes from one church to another, I have seen and heard of so many in my short life that there seems nothing very strange about them."

Miss Falconer made no answer, and presently, pleading fatigue, proposed to her young guest to amuse herself with a book until bed-time.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS FALCONER'S opportunity to confer with Mr. Danforth came unexpectedly soon. He stopped at the school the next day to take his daughter with him for a drive to a neighboring town where he had business, and when his name was brought up by the janitor, Miss Falconer went down to the library to meet him. Mr. Danforth was at first inclined to be amused at her scruples.

"It is no great matter," he said; "I had thought of taking her there myself some Sunday afternoon to hear the music. Kitty is far too sensible a girl to be caught in such a trap as that."

The quizzical look on his face was rather trying to a penitent who had just been atoning for an indiscretion by an act of humility, and it nettled her into being rather more full and emphatic concerning the girl's state of mind than her actual knowledge warranted. As she enlarged upon it he grew more serious.

"Katharine," she concluded, "has a peculiar and not easily managed character. To me she is very docile—I have no pupil so much so—and I see that she is equally obedient to her mother and to you. But, for all that, I think her quite capable of taking her own way and pushing to the very end in spite of entreaty or resistance. She lives too much in the realm of abstractions, and has an ideal of perfection which nothing in this world realizes. To people of that turn, especially when they are as ardent and imaginative as she is, one side of Roman Catholicism presents an almost irresistible attraction. I have

been repenting ever since that after listening to what she told me, I yielded to the foolish impulse which led me to expose her to it a second time. She objected to going when I first proposed it, lest it should displease you. If I may venture my advice, I would exert to the utmost an authority she obeys so readily."

"But," objected Mr. Danforth, "you see for yourself that there is no occasion. I never have forbidden her going anywhere. She simply took it for granted, knowing what I think of Romanism, that I wanted her to keep away from it."

"She will some day, or I mistake greatly. When she is older, with wider knowledge and a riper judgment, she may, perhaps, be trusted, but at present I would give her every safeguard. For such a nature as hers I know of only one—the obedience imposed by some one she really loves, or whose right to command she recognizes. She is at present very much attached to me, but I read her too well to flatter myself that I could stand in her way if once she thought it right to oppose me."

"I am not sure," said the father slowly, "that even I should wish to do so if it came to such an alternative as that; still this case is pretty clear, and I thank you."

Yet, as he turned away, his first thought found a half-audible expression in the wish that she could have been contented not to meddle. He was suffering not only from that very common manifestation of self-love which makes parents instinctively resent either express or implied blame imputed to their children, but from a paternal jealousy, wounded by the assumption that this new friend had penetrated further than he into his daughter's secret thoughts. He felt conscious of having been not merely a generous but an appreciative and sympathetic father, who, recognizing his child's aptitude and thoughtfulness, had resolved to give her every educational advantage in his power, and acted on his resolution in spite of sundry warn-

ings, more frequent of late years, which had been addressed him by his spiritual advisers. More than one minister, displeased and perplexed by the questions she asked in private or in the weekly Bible classes, had urged upon him the danger of overtraining an intelligence so slow to accept, so ready to propose objections to the religious truths presented to it. But all these warnings had indicated absolute unbelief as the peril to be feared, and Mr. Danforth, who knew the nature of his daughter's studies and took an innocent pride in her school triumphs, paid small attention.

As to any danger of the sort Miss Falconer appeared to dread, he had no fear whatever. It seemed to him absurd to suppose that his clear-headed little girl should take a direction so opposite to his own. He resented the advice to use an authority on which he had never needed to lay any serious stress, and, even in the midst of his displeasure, found something comical in the fact that Miss Falconer, in trying to enlighten her pupil on the weakness of popery, had herself fallen into a trap where she was still evidently struggling. She had been unable to hide the nature of her motive in taking the girl to her own church, and he easily divined that had Kitty conceived an equally strong attraction for what Miss Falconer called "the simplicity and elevation of our service," the latter would have found it needless to put him on his guard. He smiled as he thought of it while loosening the horse's halter from the hitching-post, and was saying to himself that this was a clear case of the pot calling the kettle black, when Kitty, her hat awry and her school satchel on her arm, came running down the steps to greet him.

They rode on for a while in silence, the father humming a hymn-tune behind his teeth, as his habit was when musing on thoughts not specially serious or perplexing. The secondary effect of his recent conversation had in fact been salutary by rousing him from the painful preoccupation just then caused him by his

business affairs. He felt doubtful whether it were worth while to mention it, but the humorous side of the matter was gaining ground on him, and he liked to share his amusement with his usually sympathetic companion. Her readiness to laugh, to seize and enjoy the lighter side of life and literature, was one of the ties which as she grew were making her friend as well as daughter to him.

"Well, Kitty," he began at last, his face grave, but a smile lurking in the corners of his eye, "what bee has Miss Falconer got in her bonnet now."

"Has she a bee?" said Kitty, who had not been informed of her father's presence until after Miss Falconer's return to the class room, and had no reason to suppose any conference had taken place between them. "I haven't heard it buzzing."

"A whole hive of them. The fact is, the good woman was so hard hit by what she saw up at the cathedral last Sunday afternoon that she takes it for granted you were damaged too. I hardly know what sort of treatment she thinks would suit your case best —a month on bread and water or a week in the coal-hole. Which shall it be?"

Katharine knew her father well enough to require no further enlightenment, nor was he in doubt as to the cause of the mingled pain and annoyance which flushed and contracted her expressive face.

"Ah!" he replied to it, "new friends are neither so wise nor so kind as the old ones, little girl. It would never have occurred to me to think of you as a likely dupe for the papists, and, if it had, I should not have jumped to her remedy for it."

He spoke with the easy confidence of a security which believes itself unassailable. Katharine, imposed on by it, suddenly took her courage in both hands, and told him, as fully as his surprise and pain and finally his anger would permit, the nature of her thoughts in the past and her desires in the present. Such a limitation is very great—so great that where it exists

between two who love each other and yet occupy the relative positions of parent and child, full confidence is probably impossible. Katharine at least succeeded in making fully intelligible neither the demands of her reason on one side nor those of her soul on the other. The latter were not really intelligible to herself. All that stood to her in the place of knowledge about the Catholic Church was to its discredit. To oppose it she had nothing but what she heard called a child's fantastic, idle whim, with a suspicion that it deserved no better name. She half recoiled from the thought of putting it to the test, even when she most fully resolved to do so should she find it possible, with an inward dread lest that might be the result. If, on the other hand, her reason spoke with unambiguous clearness and told her that whatever purported to be a divine revelation must, before all things, prove its claim to respectful hearing by being invariable, and attested by a witness incapable of corruption, how insist on such a condition as that with a father who seemed oblivious of this fundamental necessity? What she did succeed in, when her reluctance to yield her ground became plainly evident, was putting her father into a cold rage of which neither of them had supposed him capable. The passionate and imperious "Danforth temper," as his wife called it, remembering it in his father and seeing it in others of his kindred, had been so singularly free from domestic provocations in his own case that he was hardly aware of its existence. It flamed up in his eyes now with the cold luster of steel, his ruddy cheeks grew pale and his voice hardened into a tone which both of them remembered afterward with a chilling of the heart, as he forbade inquiries which he thought at once perilous and unprofitable, and enforced his command with a needless threat of banishment from home in case of disobedience. Even to himself this seemed so worse than useless that it calmed him as he uttered it, while on his daughter it had only the effect of taking away the grace of her submission.

At the time this submission wore in her own mind only the aspect of a postponement. It was characteristic of her that she made no attempt to persuade herself that duty lay on the side of her decision at this crisis of her experience, but simply avowed without pretense that she had not the heart to grieve her parents. Probably, if the argument that now went on silently within had taken place between her and another, she might at some point of it have sought momentary shelter under the plea of filial duty. Perhaps she did so even now, for the voice within her asked where that road would lead along which the only guide was the pleasure of those that loved her.

For that distinction was also plainly in her mind. She did not say, "I love my father so much that I can not grieve him," but, "He loves me so much that I will not."

Nevertheless, one phase of the matter caused her some serious thought. She had always been an obedient daughter, but now, for the first time, the abnegation of her own will offered her no satisfaction. She found, too, that a little breach had opened between her father and herself which her submission and his contentment with it by no means bridged, and of which both were sensible, though perhaps not equally so. She began to be vaguely aware that the distinction between right and wrong had to her apprehension lost something of its hitherto clearly defined outlines. A thousand hitherto dormant difficulties seemed to spring up in her mind, until it seemed to her that she had bought external peace at the cost of bitter and endless internecine war.

A final change was caused by the abrupt loss of all her interest in Miss Falconer. After the first moment she felt no resentment toward her, and would have been glad to be able to go on worshiping; she was beginning to dread those revulsions of feeling which brought her attachments one after another to a sudden close; but when she revisited the shrine she found it empty.

Miss Falconer was a general favorite with the more thoughtful and studious of her pupils, and the desk nearest her was a prize eagerly competed for at the beginning of every year. Kitty had succeeded in gaining it after many efforts, and worked harder than ever at home for the sake of the idle moments in school hours when she would be at liberty to do nothing but regard her undisturbed from behind the shelter of her wraps, hanging from a peg on the wall. Miss Falconer had often smiled inwardly at the shy yet undisguised devotion she met in Kitty's dark eyes whenever she lifted her glance from her own tasks, and was rather proud of the report she was able to make in the monthly conference of teachers concerning her improvement in docility and diligence.

"There is no real change in the girl," one of them had replied to her little boast not long before; "she deifies you—that is all there is about it. She is quite as capable as ever of taking the bit between her teeth; and as to work, it would take a good deal to persuade me that she likes it for its own sake."

Entering the class-room some minutes before school-time a few days afterward, Miss Falconer saw one of the girls occupied in transferring her belongings from a desk in the embrasure of a window at the other end of the apartment to that hitherto occupied by Katharine.

"What does this mean, Helen?" she stopped to ask, with a misgiving not untinged with personal regret.

"Oh," said Helen, looking up with a smile, "I have succeeded at last in persuading Kitty Danforth to exchange seats with me. I have been tempting her these six months and had given it up as hopeless, but she told me yesterday that the light by my window suited her eyes better. It does really—the screen makes it rather dark here, especially on rainy days."

Nothing but the most ordinary intercourse took place thereafter between teacher and pupil. But the

latter gave no ground for active disapproval, burying herself in her work, in fact, with an absorption and success beyond any she had yet shown. She was trying to fill up the void caused by a lost friendship; the friend she had already ceased to think of.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SUCCESSION of scorching July days ending in a fierce and prolonged thunderstorm which spent its force during the night, ushered in a morning serene and cloudless. As she stood at her open window before breakfast, smiling at the drooping horse chestnut fans which glistened in the level rays, Kitty reflected that a stroll beyond the city limits would dispose agreeably of the long forenoon. She had staid in-doors more than usual since vacation began, imprisoned partly by the heat and partly by the preparations making for a first visit to her mother's relatives. But these were ended now; even her trunk was strapped in readiness for an early start to-morrow; the empty day lay before her, cool-shining with the luster of its bath, yet with a hint of coming fervors in the dazzling east.

"As far as Buttermilk Falls?" said Mrs. Danforth when the girl announced her intention at table; "I wouldn't go all that distance alone. You'll be sure to want to sit down and rest before starting to come back in the heat, and there may be stragglers about."

"What if there should?" said Kitty; "I shall be a straggler myself. We can keep each other company. I begin to feel ashamed of never having been there."

Mrs. Danforth looked at the tall, willowy slip of a girl, who had risen and was tying on her brown school hat. The broad brim threw the serious luster of her eyes into shadow, but the roseleaf cheeks, and the dewy lips smiling above the rounded whiteness of her chin and shapely throat, struck the mother with a sudden half-

pleased, half-painful sense of her budding womanhood.

"O nothing," she answered. "I don't suppose there is any sort of danger, but you might as well stop next door and take Johnny Boyd along. He won't be any trouble, and it will keep him out of mischief for one morning. Mrs. Boyd's hands are full with her pickling and she will be glad to get rid of him."

"All right; I will."

Mr. Danforth too looked up from behind his glasses and his morning paper as she approached him on her way to the door.

"By the way, Kitty," he said. "I bought a book for you in Gray's last night. You will find it on the table in the upper hall, beside my hat. As you have taken to stringing rhymes yourself, I thought you might like it."

He drew his arm about her as he spoke, and with a gesture invited one of the caresses that of late had grown less frequent, and which she stooped to give him with a brightening face.

It wanted yet some hours of noon when Kitty and her young escort, having crossed two or three suburban fields and descended the slope of a gentle hill, came out at the head of a little cascade that foamed down its bed of shale to the level some thirty feet below them. The rain had swollen it to a feeble imitation of its volume in the days when, sheltered by primeval elms and beeches it had worn this deep gully through the rocks. Further on it glittered in a shallow stream across a tiny valley and beside an old mill-wheel, half sunk in weeds and grass, in bright unconsciousness of its impending destiny as a city sewer. To the east and south the Hudson sparkled in the sunshine; the Catskills stretched, blue and faint beyond; the flat tin roofs shone in the low ground between them and the river; behind them the slope they had just descended hid the upper portion of the town from view. A few old elms spread their wide branches over the grassy

space where they were standing, and here the girl, throwing aside her hat, sat down to enjoy the prospect for awhile before tearing off the wrappers from the book she had slipped into her pocket. Each of the oddly assorted pair felt that pleasure, born of residence in cities, which is neither critical nor grasping in its demands upon external nature.

"Isn't it nice?" sighed Johnny after a long look round him. "Don't you wish your folks lived in the country? Say, Kitty, don't tell mother, but I bought a fishhook and a ball of twine on the Fourth, and I've got 'em in my pocket. Where do you think fish 'ud be more likely to be? Up here, or down yonder?"

"I don't know much about the ways of fishes before they are cooked; I think you'd better try that little pool below the fall. I'm going to stay here under this tree."

"I don't suppose I shall read much, it is too pleasant to-day," mused Kitty, when at last she set about untying the knot of red booksellers' twine; "at least unless this is better poetry than Campbell's."

The little blue and gold volume bore a name unknown to her. Opening it at random, the spell of the magician who was then moving all susceptible young hearts fell on her, shutting out the actual world, and bearing her at once into that enchanted vale where sad Œnone wandered, "forlorn of Paris, once her playmate on these hills." Deaf from that moment to Johnny's frequent calls for sympathy, she was equally so to the steps that half an hour later stumbled down the slope behind her. The new comer was a tall, athletic young fellow in his early twenties, but looking older by reason of a determined resolute expression and a heavy dark mustache which nearly hid his upper lip. He looked surprised, and not agreeably so, at finding the place tenanted, but seeing himself unnoticed, he moved quietly into a favorable position for reconnoitering his predecessor. A prolonged scrutiny of the brown head drooping over the

open book brought a smile of recognition to his face, and he came nearer. His approach finally aroused Katharine from her absorption and she sprang quickly to her feet.

"I might have known," said the new-comer putting out a hand she seemed to hesitate to take, "that no one in the world but Kitty Danforth could be sitting here alone on a hot July day, so wrapped in a book that she would not hear a clap of thunder, much less an old friend nearly spraining his ankle in a tumble down this hill. You have surely not forgotten me?"

"No," answered the girl, whose look of surprise had also quickly turned to pleasure; "I did at first, and no wonder," drawing her hand lightly across her lips. "But your voice is hardly changed and your eyes not at all. How many years is it since we played our game of dominoes together?"

"A century, isn't it? And what have you been doing all this time besides growing 'tall and stately'?"

"Stately? I?" glancing swiftly down her slender length.

"Oh, it was only a quotation—you seem provocative of them somehow. What have you there this morning?"

"I never read a line of it before," said Kitty, handing him the volume.

"Tennyson? This town must be further back in the woods than I supposed if you have waited all this time for 'The Princess' and 'In Memoriam.' Curious, I had been looking at you five minutes before I was certain who you were, and a line of his was running in my mind just as a turn of your head made me quite sure. If you had not looked up when you did I should have saluted you with 'Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls!'"

"I wonder where Johnny is?" said Kitty, turning away toward the cliff with an evanescent blush and a light laugh. Richard followed her. The straw hat and the sturdy legs in their striped stockings pushed

out in front of it were still in close proximity to each other, their owner sitting motionless on the bank with the patience of a born angler, in the vain hope of a nibble. "It is Johnny Boyd, my next door neighbor. I hardly know whether he takes me out walking or whether I take him, but we generally go together."

"He seems to have more perseverance than I had at his age, but if he has no more success we may as well sit down in the shade and wait till he scrambles up again. I came home yesterday and could not resist the temptation to visit these falls this morning after the rain. I meant to call at your mother's afterward, but this is better."

"It is months," said Kitty, "since I have met your father. He told me you were away at school, but I never knew where."

"Poor old man! It makes me sad to come back and find him so bent and feeble. This is the first time I have been here in nearly six years. Yes, I have been at school. I ran away—you knew it?—to my Uncle Dick the next day after that famous game of dominoes. He was going to send me back again, but I threatened him with the sea, and then my father wrote that he thought it better I should stay. They had intended in any case to send me a little later on. I wanted to go to Harvard, and Uncle Dick was willing enough, but my father and mother both took fright over the idea of possible Unitarianism, or what-not, and prevailed on him to give me my choice between a diploma from a little one-horse denominational concern over in Connecticut and none."

"Well?"

"Oh! that was not even Hobson's choice, to my mind. I went to the Boston high-school, and for the last two years I have been attending medical lectures and riding round with my uncle among his patients. As Giddings says, a man gets along just as well in this country in medicine or law without a collegiate training as with it."

"Giddings?"

"The greatest friend I have. I wanted to bring him with me for a visit, but the memory of the old days was strong in me, and I preferred to come first and see how the land lay. It isn't a case of sour grapes with him, however. He has had his sheepskin these five years. I would have been glad of one if I could have got the right sort; but it was the same old story—these idiotic squabbles over petty religious questions, splitting up the work of education and creating almost as many half-supported 'colleges' of different dyes as there are churches of different creeds."

Kitty gave a faint sigh which did not escape Richard though he mistook its import.

"Fortunately," he went on, "there is a very fair school for girls here—as schools go—and your father has been wise enough to keep you in it. That reminds me: our folks sent me a copy of the daily paper which had the account of this year's closing exercises. I saw your prize poem in it."

This time Kitty reddened in good earnest.

"Don't mention the word poetry in connection with the stuff," she said with energy. "They gave me the *Pleasures of Hope* for it," she began again after a pause. "Last year I was presented with *Lalla Rookh* and *Paradise and the Peri*. When I read those I felt somewhat reassured about my verses. But this morning has cured me. I shall make no more rhymes."

Richard laughed.

"That is criticism with a vengeance! I hardly know which to admire more, your humility or your—"

"Conceit?" suggested Kitty.

"Well, I noticed that you took a motto from one of Shakespeare's sonnets. He didn't abash you? And Tennyson does?"

"Shakespeare is like the sun—he lights and warms you, and you never think of measuring yourself with him. But this other! It is like turning on a blaze of

gas in a hall where there is a tallow candle burning."

"Oh! stick to poetry. Call it a glow-worm!"

"Don't let us talk about it at all," said Kitty. "How pleased your father and mother must have been to see you!"

"Yes," said Richard, with a sigh. "They killed the fatted calf for me. My poor father quite broke down."

"How good he is! It always gives me pleasure to have a talk with him."

"Good? Yes—a fruitless goodness. Good-for-nothingness I should call it in any one but him. My mother had so much strength in many ways that, if he had only mastered her in the first place, they could have worked together and made something else out of their life than the miserable muddle it has always been. If ever I marry I shall take care that the gray mare is not the best horse in my stable."

"Ah!" said Kitty, "you are a more audacious critic than I am. I confine myself to books. What good is there beyond just goodness itself? And what is there to make of life except eating and drinking and sleeping, and having more or less of your own way? The less you have of it the better you are, according to all accounts. I suppose," she finished, with a laugh, "the others, who get theirs, console themselves for the lack of excellence by the good time they have."

There was a slight bitterness in her tone which struck her companion. He looked at her curiously.

"You remind me of Giddings," he said. "I wonder how you would like each other?"

"I wonder how Johnny would like his dinner?" she returned with some irrelevance, rising as she spoke. "Ah! here he comes, with wet feet and empty hands."

"Hadn't we better go home?" asked the little fellow, with a sheepish glance at the stranger and a rue-

ful one at Katharine. "It's awful hot down there, and I'm tired, and I haven't caught a thing! There's plenty of black, shiny little fishes with big heads and wiggly tails in the water, but they won't bite."

"I'm afraid your mother will think you have caught something serious, young man," said Richard, "when she sees those wet shoes and stockings. Sit down here and hold your feet out in the sun. Your wigglers will be croakers one of these fine days."

CHAPTER IX.

RICHARD NORTON and Katharine walked up the long, gentle rise after leaving the falls, at a pace which the increasing heat of the day naturally made dilatory, but which doubtless owed some part of the slowness that finally disgusted their companion to the pleasure each found in prolonging a talk insensibly fallen back into the candor distinguishing their childish intercourse. Coming mainly from the young man, and being confined to a brief account of certain scientific researches in which he had been interested and the train of revolutionary conclusions suggested by them, these confidences ill rewarded the attention which Johnny's very juvenile intelligence had been inclined to pay them. And when at last, on reaching the crest, his elders paused under the shadow of a great elm to look across the grassy hollow, where houses were as yet new and few, to the still gentler slope of the Capitol Hill, and then down at the broad river sparkling far below them, with the horse-boat plowing its way across, and the white villas on the further shore softening their glare under the hazy blue, Katharine's remarks on the beauty of her native place suddenly appeared to him altogether idle, and, pleading hunger and his mother's displeasure when the "men-folks" kept the table waiting he ran ahead without further ceremony.

"Dutiful youth!" said Richard laughing. "Or is he only imaginative and puffed up with pride by those new knickerbockers? I wore a blue pinafore halfway to my heels until I was a head taller than he is, and, though I sometimes lost my dinner by being late

for it, my inventive genius would not have been equal to that last excuse for haste. What curious piece of good-fortune brought us together this morning? I would not, of course, have passed two days in town without looking you up, but, as it happens, I have only this one at my disposal. I thought I had a week before me, but Uncle Dick telegraphed me this morning that he had been summoned professionally to Montreal and wanted me with him. He will be here to-night, and we take the early train to-morrow."

"He is a famous surgeon, then?"

"Hardly that—perfectly safe and cool-headed, and good to be with; but no one except an old patient and personal friend would have sent for him from such a distance."

"I wonder you had the heart to leave home at all to-day. I wouldn't, in your case. But, considering that I saw Buttermilk Falls for the first time this morning, though the name has been as familiar all my life as that of the land of Canaan, it is rather odd we should have met there."

"Your comparison is painfully characteristic."

"How so?"

"It sounds so natural, perhaps—so like a thing I might have said and hated myself for saying. What do you think about it all, or haven't you begun your serious thinking yet?"

"About—"

"Oh! about the way we were brought up, and the crowd of baseless beliefs and idle superstitions planted in us that it will take the best part of our lives to root out again? Are your ears as keen as ever to detect truth by the sound of it?"

"I am afraid I have been growing deaf lately. All things sound pretty much alike now—with a note of interrogation after every one. At the same time I don't quite understand why you should hate yourself for making a Biblical allusion, if it came in naturally."

"I see you don't, and it puzzles me a little. How happens it that what you have been taught so incessantly all your life has taken no deeper hold on you? I seem hardly to have surprised you by what I have been saying, and I certainly have not shocked you. For my part, the more clearly I have seen the absurdity and folly of such a training as I got at home, its want of bearing on the real questions of life, and the certainty with which all we really know and are on the eve of knowing gives it the lie, the more I have felt hampered by the associations I formed and the notions that were branded into my mind when it was young and tender and assimilated every thing. To this day there are things I can not say, and a whole code of absurd and arbitrary minor morals that I can not transgress, without something in me cringing as if it expected the lash. I am like a half-converted Jew gloating over a scrap of roast pork and yet secretly inclined to believe he will be found dead with it sticking in his throat. And when I see how the ignorant bigotry that has stamped me in this fashion has also cut off opportunities from mankind and stood in the way of knowledge, I feel a bitterness that"— he paused, and then went on in a lighter tone, his face clearing into the sudden smile that used of old to dispel its clouds—"that makes me laugh when I reflect on it in saner moments and see how ready I am to repeat in another fashion the very bigotry that I resent."

"I don't quite understand that feeling. I have none like it. I soon began to doubt some things that I was taught, but I held fast until lately to the belief that the bottom things were true; that God had made a revelation and that it was embodied in the Bible. But from the day when I first clearly understood that the Bible itself was unvouched for, that every one interpreted it as he pleased, and that the particular set of notions about Christianity put before me was only one of many among which I should some day be free to choose, it began to dawn on me

that this was the same as denying revelation altogether. It seems to me absurd to suppose that God became man for the express purpose of teaching us what to believe and what to do, and yet left things in as great an uncertainty as ever."

"Still on the old track, Kitty! I remember leaving you with that serious little face turned Romeward, but I hardly thought I should find it that way still."

"No," said Katharine, "it is not turned that way now. I meant for a long time to make inquiries about that church, but when I proposed doing so last spring I found my father so bitterly opposed to it that I gave it up. I thought then that I had simply postponed the search, but I find since that in some unaccountable way the inclination has left me, and in its place the conviction has fastened in my mind that it would be useless. I hardly know yet whether to be glad or sorry."

Her companion looked a mute interrogation, and the girl went on with that easy, unembarrassed confidence which comes more naturally between young people of different sexes who are on the same intellectual level but have no sentimental ties, than under other conditions.

"It was the gain of a loss, you know. It took away a great hope from me—I did not know how great until it was gone. I begin to find in its place a sort of sympathy for, and understanding of, others that I had not before, and which goes far toward filling up the void. It is one thing to be amused by people who seem to be making more or less excusable blunders in working out a problem that has a definite solution, and quite another to be convinced that the problem has no answer, and that any guess they may make which gives them satisfaction is just as good as any other. I feel ashamed when I think of the resentment I felt at first against my father, and how slow it has been in wearing off. I began at one time to believe that the only result of obeying him in that one

instance would be that I should presently cease to obey him in every other."

"Does he know where you are now?"

"Why should he! It cost me a great deal to yield to him last spring, when I still thought there was something at stake which it would be worth while to buy even at the price of his displeasure. But now how worse than absurd it would be to take him into my confidence! If I found myself capable of such a thing, it would go far toward proving to me that both natural affection and the sense of duty really rest on a religious foundation, which is what I have been fearing lately. I begin now to be persuaded that they are instincts and may be trusted to look out for themselves. I find, at all events, that the commandment to love one's neighbor—to a certain extent—is written so plainly on my conscience that it ceases to seem of so much importance whether or not it was written on tables of stone by the finger of God on Mount Sinai. But, all the same, I have a certain pleasure in thinking of such people as your parents and mine, whose illusions have not vanished, and in hoping that they never may."

"Let me see," said Richard, smiling down at the girl's thoughtful but very young face, "was it a hundred you were on your last birthday? For my part, I feel no such tenderness for what you call illusions when I remember my own dismal childhood and what made it what it was. My mother was tyrannical and selfish, but she had a natural wit and keenness of perception that were only half-blinded by her religious views. She kept one eye wide open on the main chance always, and, though she would have been quite ready to burn a heretic or a slaveholder, she would have kept well out of the way of scorching herself. My father, on the other hand, is the most unselfish, the simplest, the sincerest man in the world. He would not wrong his neighbor of a pin; he would not misrepresent friend or enemy by so much as an

equivocal inflection of his voice; he simply never thinks of his own comfort where that of others is concerned. All that would be admirable, if there were not another side to it. He lives in the idea that hell yawns on either side of every path in life. He thinks all light reading pernicious and all amusements sinful. He believes that every word and act not deliberately aimed at one's own salvation tends directly toward damnation. Those notions, confined to one half-educated man, embittered even my babyhood and have crippled my youth. Think of them with their force multiplied by whole generations and backed by the power of physical compulsion, and you have what Christianity, in that primitive form after which you have been hankering, has done for the world at large. Your father did a good work when he turned you away from it. Protestantism is, at all events, an advance on what went before it. Three centuries ago men who held views like mine would have been burned for them."

"Nobody is burned on either side now," said Katharine. "But if one is effectually thwarted in taking his own road, what difference does it make what the actual hindrance is? What I like, for myself and every one else, is freedom to think one's own thoughts and act on one's own judgment, no matter where they lead. But you are just like your own father and mine. You go in another direction, but you are as sure as they are that the end of all other ways is death."

"That is not fair at all. It is because I believe in freedom and want to secure it for those who will come after us. But, to insure that, it may be necessary to do some rough work in uprooting the weeds planted by those who went before us. For that reason one would like to safeguard education, so that sincerity and steadfastness shall be aids to the general advance of the race, instead of being, as they have been, its worst drawbacks."

"Poor race!"

"Don't be satirical. It is becoming, but not convincing. The plain fact is that the only thing which makes a belief in dogmatic Christianity innocuous, or even tolerable, in any given case, is that it shall be held in a Pickwickian sense and not become a spring of action. The real virtues that hold society together are what you called them just now—instincts. But when they have been twisted in the vice of dogma and then fasten themselves on a really upright heart, the better the man is by nature the worse he becomes by what he calls grace. The very tenderness that makes his bowels yearn toward his fellow-men incites him to crush out, at all risks, all that he believes likely to imperil their salvation. And then to think that he actually knows nothing at all about the matter, and shares that ignorance with every other soul of man! Why should one have any tenderness for illusions such as those?"

"Your father," said Katharine, going back, as was her wont, from generals to particulars, "has always struck me as a happy man just by reason of the intensity of his belief and his fidelity to what he thinks it enjoins. What would console him for losing it, his life remaining what it is? If it were to be had by wishing for it, there is nothing I can think of that I would not exchange for one like it. But the stones in the road are too many."

"Take my word for it, they will not always be so if that remains your attitude of mind. You may not end where he has, but some fetich or other you will set up and try to bend the universe before it. For me, I shall come along with a hammer and break your idols for you."

"And welcome. It is because an idol with a crack in it is a trifle worse than none that my altar is empty at present. But I think you may spare yourself the trouble, all the same. I never set up Dagon overnight but that I find him on his nose in the morning."

"Do you know, Kitty," said Richard, after a somewhat prolonged silence, "that you surprise me greatly?

When I began talking to you a while ago it was with the expectation of shocking you a bit and drawing down on myself a little good-natured scolding for my aberrations. How do you happen to have wandered so far from the regular path? I have had access to all sorts of books, besides making some friends among older men of liberal views. Then there is my profession into the bargain: *Ubi tres medici, duo athei*, says the old proverb. But where did you get your notions? With all your father's indulgence in the matter of books, I can not imagine his not taking every care to keep anti-Christian literature out of your way. Where did you get hold of it?"

"Nowhere. I never saw an infidel book in my life. I knew, as a matter of ancient history, that there had been infidel writers: Voltaire, you know, and Paine, and—but I don't think I ever heard any others mentioned, and I took it for granted they had all been routed and put to flight centuries ago. Perhaps they were. I hardly know when it began to be plain to me that the incessant throwing of missiles which goes on in sermons and the religious publications that come to the house must mean that there is a pretty lively foe somewhere close at hand. It was like building a snow fort: you haven't much to do but dig a trench in a snow-bank and unload your shovel on the other side—the wall will pile up of itself. It was since last spring, at all events. Then I am to take up Paley and Butler next year, and have been dipping into both of them this vacation. Why do people put such elaborate explanations, apologies, excuses before school-girls who have been taught that Christianity is as certain as the multiplication table? Who can help seeing that all is not plain sailing? Pope or Pagan—one or other of those giants is sure to swallow up people like me whose only speech is yea and nay. I used to wonder why Bunyan chose to set those two over against each other, but I know now."

"I see," said Richard, thoughtfully. "You travel

fast because you travel on straight lines. For my part, I begin to see the broad margin that doubt and indecision may honestly claim on either side the road."

They were nearing Katharine's door as he spoke, and Mrs. Danforth's grave, rather anxious, face was looking out from the entry.

"There is mother," said Kitty. "It would be pleasant, and she is sure to beg you to come in to dinner, but I don't believe you ought."

"You are quite right about your conscience," he answered, laughing; "it is plainly ample enough for two. Suppose I should say that I do not require a prohibition to prevent my going in? As a matter of fact, I think I will finish up my visit home when we come back from Montreal, which can't be more than a week from now at furthest. I might stay here all through August if any body made it worth my while. Do you think you would be more hospitable another time?"

"Mother would, I don't doubt," said Kitty, smiling mischievously, "but you won't find me. I am going to Goshen to-morrow for the rest of the vacation, and my cousin, Anna Germain, is coming back to enter the graduating class with me. I shall be away until September."

"Then I was even more fortunate this morning than I thought for. How do you do, Mrs. Danforth? This young lady's escort basely forsook her, and I am so unfamiliar with the town that it took me an endless time to find her way home."

"Johnny Boyd came in to tell me Kitty had a gentleman with her," said Mrs. Danforth, with a rather stiff, but kindly greeting. "I shouldn't have known you—you are grown beyond remembrance. Won't you come in?"

"I would, but dare not. This little dragon of filial respect has just been ordering me off to my own mother. If truth-telling were not my foible, I would

say I came this way merely to catch the Kenwood stage which I see coming. Good-by, Mrs. Danforth; good-by, Kitty."

"And so that is Richard Norton—a full grown man!—What *does* he want to wear all that brush about his mouth for?" Then, looking meditatively at Kitty, "I shall have to put up your braids and let down your frocks next. Dear me! how time flies. It seems only the other day that you were a baby."

CHAPTER X.

THE time for Katharine's visit had been fixed with reference to her father's business engagements, which took him to New York toward the end of July. He left her about ten o'clock next morning at the station nearest Mr. Germain's farm, which lay on the outskirts of Goshen. She had seen Mr. Germain once or twice at her own home, but had as yet no acquaintance with his family.

They were met at the station by her Cousin Anna, who drove over for her in a pony carriage. She was a vigorous brunette, apparently some three years Kitty's senior, whose rather cold and constrained manners were somehow oddly at variance with her speech and the impression she produced upon the eye. She would have been handsome but for a mouth a thought too prominent, and an over-bony and well-developed forehead.

"There are so many of us at home," she said, as she turned Molly's head in that direction after the train started, "that I think I will take the long way round, and not be in any hurry about it. That will have the double advantage of giving you a glimpse of the river and securing a moderate amount of time to ourselves. Every one will want a share of you as soon as we get there. That is the worst thing about such a large family as ours—twelve of us there were originally, by two mothers, but two of the first brood are dead now and two are married. I was away a good deal before my mother's death, near Chatham, with her people. I went to school with my cousin Lizzie Carew. But I had to come home three years

ago and help Mary with the younger children. There was a baby then, but it died the next summer. It was a great set-back for me. Now Mary is going to be married next June to Jonas Asbell, who has the next farm to ours, and that is another. They have been engaged this long time, and he was very stiff about having it come off this summer instead of next, but I persuaded Mary to let me have one more year before tying myself down to that old tread-mill of women's work in which my mother died. Aunt Anna left me a thousand dollars last spring and I want to have some good of it. I began Latin with Lizzie and wish to go on with it and take up French. There isn't the ghost of a chance to do so here."

"Do you like to study?" asked Kitty. "I don't. I like the results of it, but I should be very well pleased if there were some way of absorbing knowledge through one's pores."

"I like it for itself," said Anna; "it gives me a sense of being very virtuous to work hard at something really important—not like this endless looking after milk-pans and cheese-presses, and keeping the little ones out of mischief, which all has to be done over again every day, with nothing to show for it. I should have liked such a life as Lizzie Carew is going to lead."

"What is Lizzie going to do?"

"She is preparing for the ministry."

"What?" exclaimed Kitty in amused surprise.

"Yes; Cousin Aaron, her eldest brother, used to be a Unitarian minister. You know that mother's relatives are not orthodox Friends any more; they became Hicksites."

"I knew they were Quakers—Friends, I mean," said Kitty, "but I know nothing about any differences there may be among them."

"Well, the orthodox believe in private inspiration and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and worship without external forms, but don't differ much otherwise

from the generality of Christians. The Hicksites are just like them, except in denying the divinity of Christ. Mother was a Hicksite as far as she was any thing. I can remember the disputes that used to go on between her and father and his folks when I was a child. They were Presbyterians, you know, and my father was very set in his ways at first, and there was constant trouble. But when my Aunt Sally went mad about predestination and hanged herself over the banisters it gave him such a shock that I think he must have forced himself to stop thinking about such things. They agreed to disagree, I suppose. I was sent away to school, as I told you, and the younger ones have come up without having any particular views taught them. Mary belonged to the first family and she has got a good many of their old-fashioned whims about her."

"What trouble religion makes," said Kitty. "It is a great pity, I think, that our forefathers did not stay in the old church and the old country. Fancy how delightful it would be to be French girls, with all our thinking done for us on that score and our minds free for other things. Now we have to puzzle it out for ourselves or else stay in the maze all our lives."

"I don't agree with you at all," said Anna. "I am very proud of my Huguenot descent; and I like, besides, the constant struggle of independent thought on that and all other matters. The result one arrives at doesn't matter so much; it is the work and play of one's mind that is of consequence."

"Is Lizzie Carew of the same opinion? If she is I don't quite see the object of preparing for the ministry. What is she going to teach and preach about? And what could have put such a notion in a girl's head, anyway?"

"I began to tell you and then we switched off on another track. Cousin Aaron preached for awhile, but he concluded he would have a larger field by going about to lecture on slavery and women's rights. It is only two branches of the same subject, you know.

And he thinks, and so do most of the great women connected with the latter movement, that the cause is best served by example. Lizzie writes and talks very well ; she is nearly twenty-three now, and she read two or three essays—her graduating one was *splendid*—before her brother's congregation, and they gave her a call. She won't settle down over the church before next fall. Yes, she has just the same opinions that I have, and so has Aaron. There are a *thousand* things to preach about—slavery, and the freedom of the mind, and general culture, and philanthropy, and the liquor traffic, and then always the woman question. The field is just *ripe* for the harvest—and besides, there is the popular theology to be ridiculed out of court. One of my far away cousins is settled now at that work in your city. That is one of my reasons for wanting to go there."

"A woman ?"

"No ; it is Arthur White. He has quite a society of Unitarians there now. I don't think they had any church before his time."

"O yes ; I know. They have a little church that used to be a theater."

"He is an immensely smart man ; he has written a book."

"Has he ?" said Kitty, much interested. "I would like to know an author. What is his book about ? Is it good ?"

"Splendid ! The *Almighty Dollar* he calls it ; it is against materialism and worldliness. We will go and see him when I come up ; I met him five years ago at Uncle Carew's. He was staying in the neighborhood with a great friend of his, Louis Giddings. They were Harvard men and not long out of college. Lizzie and I used to regard them with great awe on account of their smartness. Mr. Giddings was a poet I believe, at least, he had the class poem when he graduated. We saw very little of him ; he was very moody and melancholy ; we used to think him the ideal of a poet

on that account. We heard afterward that he had had some serious trouble. I never knew exactly what, but I think it was a love affair."

"The name sounds familiar," said Kitty. "I wonder if it is the same person that a friend of mine from Boston mentioned to me this week? He said I was like him."

"Then it surely isn't," said Anna, looking at her cousin, "for you are not the least in the world like Louis Giddings. He was a French Canadian on the mother's side, I believe, but his father was a Massachusetts Yankee. I don't know where he lives now, nor what profession he adopted. Arthur White was the really great man of the two. He is a sort of Luther, engaged in the reformation of Protestant orthodoxy. We will go and hear him."

"Perhaps we will," said Kitty, smiling. "My people belong to the class he is trying to reform, and it is just possible they may not see the utility of a new Luther with his hand raised against them instead of the old enemy."

"But you? They would surely not prevent you from going to see and hear him if he should happen to please you?"

"Wouldn't they? You see it isn't the same thing with us and with you. My father and mother have always been of one mind. There have been no such disputes as you speak of here, and they take their religion very seriously."

"Yes, I know. There wouldn't be much occasion for Arthur's special kind of warfare if the old people were not drawn up in a tolerably solid line before him. But the future belongs to him and to us who think like him; and you are young, and you belong to the future."

"Oh, I belong to the past, too, or to the passing. I doubt if your cousin Arthur could tell me much I want to know, if ridiculing Protestant orthodoxy is his special function. I hardly remember the time

when I have not been able to do that for myself. I am not of your mind about the pleasures of warfare. I don't see that there is room for any real struggle. Either there is something positively true in revealed religion—and then what one has to do is to go back along the road and look for the original starting place —or there isn't, and in that case there is no use in disputing about it. Let every one please himself. I could feel myself perfectly free, I think, in either case. If I knew God had spoken, revealed Himself and His will, I would ask nothing better than to obey. And if, on the other hand, I felt absolutely sure He had not, I could be at ease too. But if ever I do conclude that I am no better off than a cow or a sheep, it will go hard with me if I don't at least try to be as peaceable about it. What is the good of disputing when you can never arrive at any conclusion?"

They were driving in at the front gate as she spoke, and a roly-poly, lisping little girl came running out to meet them, and clamored to get into the carriage. She hung back against Anna's knees a moment, regarding Kitty shyly from behind a tangled fringe of curls, and then accepted her overtures with great apparent contentment.

"I would prefer your task to Lizzie's," Kitty said; "it must be delightful to be elder sister to little tots like this. If only they would never grow up and never learn to talk straight!"

"Ah, yes! it is easy to see you have none at home. Wait until there are three or four bothering under your heels, wanting their faces washed and their shoes tied, and *then* see how you will like it."

"Oo don't wathe my fathe," lisped Lucy, "and thithter Mary tithe my thooth."

"But I have to think about not having done it," said Anna, drawing rein in front of the porch. "And do you remember, little thick-tongue, that small girls should be seen and not heard. They shouldn't even be seen with their hair rumpled to that extent."

CHAPTER XI.

MR. GERMAIN was a prosperous dairy farmer, who raised, besides, no inconsiderable quantity of wool and mutton. His acres were many, and his house roomy, comfortable and old-fashioned. Five generations of his forefathers had occupied one or another portion of it, and each had modified, added or rebuilt to suit his ideas of comfort and convenience. He had himself torn down one wing and built another with a view to obliterate the souvenirs of the tragedy to which his daughter had referred. He was a hale and hearty man of nearly sixty, with snowy hair and keen, alert black eyes, who seemed as if he might still have a score or more of vigorous years before him.

The work of the farm demanded numerous hands, and he employed them, but within doors the whole burden of domestic economy appeared to devolve upon the eldest of the children left at home, a shy, soft-spoken, motherly girl of twenty-four, but looking younger, whose slight shoulders seemed unequal to it. Her physical labors were not great, for all attainable assistance was procured, but the care, the responsibility for every thing was upon her. She was her father's confidant and adviser, his conscience he sometimes called her, and to the younger children a veritable mother. Lisping Lucy clung to her like her shadow, and daily announced her intention of going to live with her if ever she went away "to Mithter Athbelth's houth." She had a lovely face, dark like Anna's, but without her sister's brilliant color, a slight, perfect oval in contour, and lighted by large, soft,

melancholy eyes. The contrast between her and her lover, a heavy, thoroughly bucolic young fellow of five- or six-and-twenty, with an incipiently morose expression, was very great. To Kitty, who took to Mary at once, as was her way whenever she encountered what she called "goodness" under a charming exterior, he had but one redeeming point—the evident intensity of his passion for her.

"He looks rather vexed now, poor fellow," Mary said to her in a moment of confidence, divining, perhaps, what was passing in her cousin's mind, "but it is rather hard lines for him, I am afraid. We have been engaged since he was twenty and I eighteen, and were to have been married the year that mother died. That put it off, of course, for with such a family as this there must be some one at the head who will take a real interest. You can't hire that. We did hope that Anna would be ready for it by this time, but she has her own ideas, and then somehow she don't seem to get on with the children, although she is their full sister, which I am not. She is so smart, you know, and she has always been away a great deal. And Martha, who is more like me, is only fifteen. I really hardly know what I ought to do sometimes."

"What about? the housekeeping?" asked Anna, catching the last words as she came out on the porch where they were sitting in the moonlight after Mr. Asbell's departure. "There is really no sense in your scruples. You might take your own way if you chose, and I mine, and nobody be a bit the worse. I don't at all like Master Jonas's sulky scowls at me, as if I were the author of all his woes. I am as innocent of them as the babe unborn. There are plenty of women who would be willing and eager to come here, and perfectly capable of looking after the children and the work. You could take Lucy with you—for that matter, you would never be able to leave her behind."

"I've seen enough of women who come in to look after widowers' children," said Mary. "Nobody can

do it well for money, unless they have hearts good enough to do it without, at a pinch, and as for those who have something else in view, you know very well that there is nobody but Polly Trotter. If she came here once, I wouldn't answer for her ever going away again, and I should have that on my conscience. Nobody wants her here—nobody but herself even *thinks* of it, but if we make her a necessity we must be answerable for the consequences."

"Polly Trotter!" said Anna laughing. "Kitty, my sister is romantic. Polly is a sour old maid five miles west of here. Rumor says she set her cap at my father before each of his marriages, and that she is furbishing it up again. If he never looked at her when he was young is he likely to begin at sixty? Mary has a horror of her because people say she has led all her bound girls a dismal life. It probably isn't true; people always exaggerate such stories. Besides, I was talking of a housekeeper and not a wife. Polly wouldn't come as the one and wouldn't be asked as the other."

"I wouldn't be too sure, if I were you. I know what I know, and I don't put too much trust in people's stories either. The last girl she had sent up from New York I took in myself after she ran away, and a frightful time she had had of it. However, there is no need of talking about it. The question is settled for another year as far as I am concerned and you too."

"As far as you are concerned, perhaps, but I do wish you would take Jonas in hand where my part comes in. I asked him a civil question to-night about our picnic to-morrow, and he snapped me up as if he were going to bite me. She might at least teach him manners, don't you think so, Kitty?"

Kitty gave Mary's hand a little squeeze under cover of the darkness, but did not trust herself to make an answer.

"If I were Jonas," she was thinking, "I would

carry her off in spite of every thing; but if I were she there wouldn't be any such Jonas as that."

The picnic to which Anna alluded was only a family affair, which came off at the end of the first week of Kitty's visit. The scene of it was a small lake skirted by a grove some few miles distant from the farm. It was thoroughly enjoyed by every body and the boating prolonged so far into the evening that a telegram which came for Kitty at five o'clock was not delivered until too late for her to catch the night train north.

She had been in unusually high spirits, but they sank the moment she heard of the arrival of the message; her thoughts flew at once to her father with the swift, foreboding instinct of affection. It had been worded with cruel directness by her childless Uncle Horace, and she dropped it out of her hand and turned with a face like death to Mary, who opened her arms quickly, thinking she was about to faint. Anna picked up the paper and read it aloud:

"*We think your father is dying. Come.*"

"Humph!" said Mr. Germain under his breath, "why do people take sledge-hammers to kill flies?" Then taking out his watch, "It is too late to start to-night, my child," he said, answering the question he saw in the girl's eyes; "the last train went up at ten, and there are only two on Sunday. We can get you off by five to-morrow. Put her to bed at once, Mary, she looks ready to drop. And don't be too much alarmed, my dear," he went on, taking Katharine's cold hand; "while there is life there is hope, and these telegrams always say too much or too little. I will go up with you in the morning."

Katharine was too little nervous and in too vigorous health to faint, but the shock was nevertheless so great as to make speech well nigh impossible to her. She yielded passively to Mary's kindly offices and left her without remonstrance to make all preparations for her early start. When they were finished her cousin passed

into the adjoining chamber, where she found Anna packing her own trunk.

"You will go at once, then?" Mary asked.

"Yes; father thinks it would be better, even if there should have to be any change in our plans afterward. I suggested it, but he saw directly that it was the right thing to do. Mrs. Danforth was alone there with a servant when Kitty came, and I may be of some use."

"I was afraid there was some bad news coming," said Mary, sitting down on the side of the bed with her candle in her hand. "While I was in Kitty's room this morning a bird flew in at the window, and then turned and fluttered out again."

"Oh! nonsense, Mary. How can you be so superstitious? You are always having warnings and dreaming dreams. You are as bad as Granny Jones at the Corners."

"Granny Jones is a good deal wiser than some of the people that laugh at her. And you can't deny that there is something in my warnings. Look at this one, now! And though you all joked me out of burning the salt when it was spilled last winter, didn't my father have that lawsuit afterward with old Deacon Potter? I saw the new moon over my left shoulder, too, this month."

"And weren't you born with a caul?" said Anna, with a faint but perceptible scoff in her voice, "and wasn't it pulled off the wrong way? And don't you see winding sheets in the candles and hear death-watches in the walls? Oh! what an old woman you will make, Mary."

"It is all very well to laugh," said Mary good-naturedly, "but it seems to me that the old signs and omens are at least no more ridiculous than that nonsense about table-turning and spirit-rapping that you brought back with you from Uncle Carew's. If you are going to start so early you'd better go to bed now and let me finish your packing. You will have to

be up by four in order to have breakfast and get to the station at five."

It was noon the next day when Katharine reached home. She had fallen asleep after midnight, and when she woke youth and hope reasserted themselves and she was able to throw off her depression in great measure. The sentiment of stability and permanence which most children have in connection with their parents was so strong in her that, after the first shock of fear and grief was over, she was really incapable of grasping the idea of a life from which either one or other of them should have departed. All the way home her thoughts were busy with the sick-bed and the cares with which she would surround it; she was grieving over the shadow of estrangement which had come between her father and herself and been thrown off so lately, taking all the blame of it on her own shoulders, and imagining the thousand caressing ways in which she would obliterate the traces of it from his memory. As to bitterer forebodings, it was not so much that she resisted them as that they had taken no actual hold upon her mind.

Mr. Germain, having accompanied the two girls, had thought it unnecessary to telegraph the hour of their arrival, so that there was no one to meet them at the depot. They drove to the house, and Katharine, not waiting for the others, sprang hastily from the carriage and ran up the steps. The door stood partly open, as if to secure a current of air, and as she entered an unfamiliar, painful sound—the loud, monotonously recurrent breathing of apoplexy—smote her ear and brought with it the first sense of approaching loss. She had not wept the night before, but now she broke into a storm of sobs and tears which brought her mother from the sick-room to the top of the stairs. Her face was white and drawn with grief and watching, and her usually quiet, self-contained voice had a strained, unnatural pitch. She took her daughter in her arms as she said: "Hush, Kitty! He was asking

for you yet this morning, but he has not spoken now since nine o'clock. Why did you not come last night ?"

But Katharine could not answer, save by the backward gesture with which she indicated her companions. She drew away from her mother's embrace and passed on into the sick-room, where several people were collected in groups that photographed themselves upon her memory, although at the moment she seemed conscious only of the pinched, contracted face upon the pillow, with its eyes closed and sunk far back in their sockets, its hollow jaws from which the false teeth had been taken, and a strange resemblance to her grandmother that she had never seen before. The minister had been kneeling by the bedside, but he rose now and gave place to Katharine. Aunt Anne Warren stood at the head, her face flushed and her full, red-lipped mouth drawn more to one side than usual, and Uncle Horace was looking out of the window, apparently lost in contemplation of the grape-arbor. Two or three of the church trustees, who seemed to have come in with the minister after morning service, were standing with their heads together near the mantle-piece. Katharine remembered it all afterward, and recalled even the suppressed tone in which one of them asked whether any one had seen or heard of Brother Deyo since yesterday morning. Her senses were at once sharpened and dulled by the strain upon her, for at the moment she seemed to herself to see nothing but her father, and to hear nothing but the hard, difficult breath as it passed between his parched and open lips. She sank down on her knees beside him and put her hand on his, which lay on the outside of the light covering. It was burning hot, but it was motionless. His eyes remained closed when she laid her face on the pillow, and her sobs, violent, irrepressible, which seemed to tear her very heart, elicited no sign that they reached his ear. She said nothing, the words that express emotion being now, as ever, hard for her to utter, and in the presence of strangers

seeming impossible. But her soul cried within her for one last token of recognition.

Presently her mother came behind her, and, stooping, whispered in her ear a request that she would try to control herself and give place to the doctor. It was his second visit since morning, and Katharine heard him saying that although there could be no hope of improvement, nor even of recovered consciousness, yet death might not arrive for several hours. She had retreated from the bedside and stood in the doorway leading to an adjoining room, her head leaning against the jamb, her whole frame shaking with the passion of her grief. She cried out suddenly, in a voice that struck her own ear strangely, so agonized and piercing was it:

"He *will* not die without speaking to me! I can not have it—I don't believe it. Oh! will nobody go for another doctor?"

"There would be no use," said the physician, answering, not Katharine, but the quieter interrogation made by Mr. Germain, who was also standing by the bedside. "There was very little hope from the first, but since his stroke this morning the entire medical faculty could do nothing for him. Still, if the family wish for a consultation—"

"No," said Mrs. Danforth, toward whom he had turned with a rising inflection and lifted eyebrows; "I know it would be useless." And she went toward her daughter, speaking to her again in the tense whisper which betrayed her nervous exaltation. "Try to be quiet, Kitty," she said, her features working and her fingers twitching restlessly under the pressure she was putting on herself. "Have I not thought of all that? The room is full of strangers."

But Katharine broke away from the hand laid upon her arm. "Oh!" she cried, "if no one will do any thing I will go for a doctor myself. He shall not die like this!" And she ran down the stairs before she could be hindered, and rushed into the street, her head

bare and her face streaming with tears. She had gone only a few steps when her way was barred by two gentlemen who were coming slowly in the opposite direction. The elder caught her by the hand as she was flying past him.

"It is Kitty Danforth," he said to his companion. "What is the matter, my child? Where are you going?"

The girl looked up and recognized the kind eyes.

"Oh Mr. Norton!" she cried, "my father is dying, and Dr. Purcell says he can do nothing for him, and they are going to let him die without calling any one else. Oh! won't you go for some one?"

"I will go back home and fetch my uncle," said the younger man. "He will come, if I ask him, and no one in this town could be as good. You would better go in with her, father; she seems half beside herself."

Poor Katharine! Her first wild revolt against the inevitable availed her nothing. There was another kind and sympathizing face to remain up to the last beside the sick man—but that was all. Dr. Norton came, but he could only confirm the verdict of the family physician. The slow hours went by, the heavy, stertorous breathing marking off the moments, ceasing sometimes altogether for so many that all seemed over, then going on again, perceptibly slower and fainter after every pause. Yet the interval before death arrived was so long that there came a brief space in which Katharine found herself at last alone with her father. She called him then, for the first time, by his name; begging for a last pressure from the contracted but still burning fingers, to assure her that he was not unconscious of her presence, her sorrow, and her love. As she thus cried aloud the shriveled eyelids lifted once and showed the glazed eyeballs, covered by the films of approaching death. But there was no other sign. And then the room filled up again; the night-lamp was lighted and threw

dreary shadows in the corners; the sick man's breast heaved more and more faintly, the breath stopped for longer and longer intervals, and at last, standing at the foot of the bed, having yielded her place to her mother, who sat with one hand on her husband's and the other covering her face that she might not see him pass away, Katharine, whose eyes never left him and whose tears had never ceased to flow, beheld the little spasm, the drawing-up of the limbs so long motionless, the whole bitter, painful, humiliating spectacle of helpless humanity sinking into nothingness.

For that is what it seemed to her. As the end came, and even her mother broke into a loud cry, and her aunt into wild, hysterical lamentations, her own emotion died into a passionless calm. Mr. Norton, kneeling down, began at once in his high-pitched voice a prayer, not for the dead but for the living, asking resignation and patience for them, and especially that the loss might be sanctified to the daughter, who was yet so far from the fold of the Good Shepherd. The words smote upon her ear like a mockery. Her grief seemed spent, and herself as dead to all appeals as the poor body beside which she had thrown herself. For the moment death appeared to her the absolute end of all things. Extinction, hopeless, utter, was what the sight she had just witnessed for the first time signified to her. "I had a father," she was saying to herself, "but I have none. He has gone like the flame of a candle into absolute night."

As the prayer ended she heard her mother's voice calling her, and, rising from the bed, she went and kneeled down beside her. The veil of reserve was for once broken, and the poor woman was bewailing aloud the husband of her youth.

"Twenty-five years," she said, her voice tremulous and broken, but not even now rising to a cry, "we have lived together and there has never passed a bitter word between us. And in all those years he has never spent one evening away from me, except when

business called him or he was at church. Katharine !" and she put her arms out to her child, at once embracing her and holding her off, that she might look into her eyes, "you have been our sole anxiety. Oh ! will you not now promise me to give your heart to God and prepare to meet us both hereafter ?"

Katharine was silent, turning on her mother a pair of steady eyes which yet seemed not to see her, so stony and withdrawn into herself was their regard. The minister, who had called in again after evening church to make inquiries, only to find that all was over, approached the pair and addressed to her some exhortations that were, perhaps, injudicious. They drew at last a response which seemed to pierce the mother's heart not less keenly than the blow which had just fallen on it.

"Don't ask me, mother," she said. "I have tried, and I can not. I have no belief, no faith in Christianity at all."

CHAPTER XII.

"TROUBLES and pleasures, I would rather they all came on me at once, without a warning," Katharine had said in talking to her cousin only a week before the day which found her father lying in his coffin. Misfortune seemed to have taken her at her word. While yet the hush of death was in the house, and friends and neighbors were passing in and out with quiet steps and whispered utterance, lest they should disturb the widow and the orphan, the busy world outside was less considerate. Even on Saturday Mr. Warren had been called from the sick-chamber to consult with the foreman of the mill, who came to say that the junior partner had been absent all day from the office, where an unusual number of notes had been presented, and that his residence, whither he had sent to make inquiries, appeared to be closed. Meanwhile the cash-box was empty, he could draw no money from the bank without the firm signature, and the men wanted their wages. Mr. Danforth had been taken suddenly ill on his way home from the office on Friday, at the close of the first day he had been able to devote to business since his return, and at the time when this message arrived his recovery was already doubtful. His brother-in-law, unwilling to disturb him, drew his own check for the amount necessary for the men, told Williams to reassure the holders of the notes by saying that Mr. Deyo's absence, which had doubtless been arranged with Mr. Danforth on Friday, would terminate as soon as word could be sent him of the latter's condition, and dismissed him. Then came death, and that the mill should remain

closed until after the funeral was only natural. But when that passed without Mr. Deyo's return, and no news as to his whereabouts or that of his family seemed forthcoming from any quarter, suspicions were aroused which did not respect even the house from which the dead had just been carried. Mrs. Danforth's privacy was, indeed, jealously guarded for the present, but Mr. Warren and Mr. Germain were deep in consultation with creditors whose claims could not much longer be kept from her knowledge. The inquiries that were set on foot speedily resulted in eliciting the fact that the junior partner had been for some time engaged in private speculations which had turned out unfortunately. During Mr. Danforth's recent absence he had pledged the firm name, not only to meet his liabilities, which came due only on the previous Saturday, but to raise funds with which he had probably lined his pockets before decamping, as their disposition could not be otherwise accounted for. The whole loss would fall on the estate of Mr. Danforth, his partner having recently converted all his own private property into cash. Had the former lived, all might possibly have been righted, the mill property being valuable, and confidence in his probity being so general that not a word was now uttered in his condemnation even by the most grasping and anxious of the creditors.

"It is all the work of that scoundrel Peter Deyo," one of them said in taking his leave—"a sanctimonious rascal that I never could endure, and that I often wondered how Danforth could get along with. Still, I did not myself believe him capable of the particular sort of villainy he has been up to."

"Let us get out of the house," Mr. Warren said to Mr. Germain as they still stood on the stoop after this man's departure; "the atmosphere in-doors is stifling and this news is sickening."

"It means absolute poverty, I suppose, for Eliza and her daughter?" asked the latter, with a troubled face.

"Not quite so bad as that, I think. I mentioned the Pearl Street houses just now—partly I am afraid, to get rid of that loud-mouthed Dobbins as soon as possible—but I doubt whether they can be touched in any case. One of them, I know, was Eliza's by right of inheritance, and I have an impression that something else was secured to her at the time James went into this partnership, in consideration of her signing away her right of dower in another piece of property that he wanted to turn into money. John Danforth was his brother's legal adviser while he lived, and he was always a long-headed fellow. He drew up old Richard Richards' will and prevailed on him to leave his property to his wife, who had earned half and saved the whole of it, when the curmudgeon wanted to give her only her thirds and the rest to his own family. Eliza benefited by her death to some extent. He prepared Danforth's will also before the partnership was entered into, and I was asked if I would act as joint executor with Eliza. We had some talk about it in the office that day, I remember. My brother-in-law wanted simply to provide for paying his just debts and then leave every thing else to his wife in trust for the child. He was absolutely clear of the world then, and John was trying to talk him into securing something to his wife by deed before risking every thing on an uncertainty. I don't know, though, whether it was done, and if it was I doubt if ever he told her about it. He was apt to be close-mouthed at home on business matters. Then, too, he may have made some different arrangement since. It is a bad job in any case."

"You feel quite persuaded, I suppose, that he knew nothing of what was about to happen?"

"On the contrary I think it was probably the shock of finding something wrong when he went down to the mill on Friday that brought about his death. Williams told me the next day that he had overheard some high words between them in the office the afternoon before,

but I thought little of it. James had a peppery temper of his own, and I knew that he had been dissatisfied for some time with Deyo's ways of doing business. But he was as honest as the sun, and not given to suspecting others of what he would have been incapable of himself. Certain things that Dobbins has been saying just now, if they are exactly true, ought to have raised doubts in his mind that Deyo was violating his obligations by entering into private transactions. The cat probably got out of the bag that last afternoon, and his anger was too much for him."

Mr. Warren's surmises were very near the truth. His share of the legitimate profits arising from the business—the manufacturing of linseed oil, and the cake made from the pressed seed, which was sold as fodder for cattle—had for some time past seemed insufficient to Mr. Deyo, who, after a brief widowhood, had espoused a new wife with an ambition to make a greater show in the world than prudence would have counseled. The business was sound but not extensive; Mr. Danforth had put in most of the capital at the start, while his partner, who had been accustomed to it in England, had chiefly contributed his experience. Mr. Danforth, simple in his own tastes, given to no extravagances, unless his large gifts to his church might be so accounted, and married to a wife naturally inclined to economy and careful living, had been gradually accumulating property, investing something every year with sagacity and safety, and congratulating himself on the provision he was making for his daughter. Mr. Deyo, to do him justice, had contemplated no further dishonesty than was implied in his resolve to break the terms of his agreement and speculate with his own savings. Even up to the last, when the disastrous results of these speculations had made the steep incline from probity to rascality still steeper and more slippery, and he had signed the firm-name to cover his private losses, he did so with the intention of owning up to his partner, throwing him-

self on his mercy, and trying by strict economy to retrieve the past. The possibility of a still greater and final dishonesty was, indeed, latent in his mind, and when he made his disclosures on Friday he did not avow the loans he had just effected, waiting until he had made sure, as he said to himself, that Mr. Danforth would listen to reason and consent to silence. But the latter was wounded in a tender point—his commercial conscience was sound to the core, and his scorn and anger, fatal to his own life, put out the last sparks also of the other's integrity. He simply carried out then certain intentions, never yet fairly avowed, but forming in that underhand, subtle way common to men who juggle with their consciences and lie to the last, even to themselves, and fled, salving the wounds of his self-respect with such a quietus as was afforded by the reflection that his partner would tide over it in time. Time, however, was precisely what had failed him. So far as was at present evident, the whole visible results of his life of industry and honesty would be swept away and his wife and child left destitute.

Such was the additional stroke of misfortune to be aimed at Mrs. Danforth while she was yet bleeding from the first, and Horace Warren, little as he was given to sentimental weakness, shrank from inflicting it.

"I must get my wife home," he said to Mr. Germain as they approached the house again; "here she will do nothing but fall into hysterics, which are as much of a nuisance to Eliza as they are to—other people. I wish you would break the news to her. Try to find out if she knows any thing about a deed in her favor. I saw lawyer Ingham at the funeral, and he told me he would bring up the will and some other papers to-morrow morning. I hope something of the sort may be found among them."

The tidings, however, seemed to affect Mrs. Danforth less than might have been expected. She knew

little of business, had never borne the burden of pecuniary responsibility nor been called on to take independent action. That she would be poorer than her husband had supposed was all that appeared to strike her at first, and all she seemed to feel was sympathy for his wasted efforts.

"Poor James!" she said, "to have worked so hard and so long, and to so little purpose." Then, after a pause, "I never liked that Deyo. When he used to get up in the experience meetings and tell what a rascal he had been and would be yet but for the grace of God, I always used to think—but there! there's nothing gained by hard words. That is what James meant, then, when he told me with his last conscious breath to pay up every thing. I thought he must be wandering, for there were no debts so far as I knew."

"He did tell you so?"

"Yes, on Saturday morning. He had been in such agony with cramps all night that all he could do was groan, and when they stopped he fell right off into a stupor. The doctor thought he never would come out of it, but he did, and was trying hard to speak for some little time before he could get out a word. Then he said, 'Eliza—the notes—pay all.' He never said another syllable except to call for Kitty."

Then, a sudden apprehension seizing her, "Can I pay every thing, do you think? Will there be enough? Are the debts heavy?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Germain; "some of the claims are rather heavy, I believe. Still, there will be the usual delay to pay them in, and Warren thinks the property will sell well. In any case he tells me you have something of your own."

"It can't be much. There is mother's house, and Aunt Jane left me hers and five hundred dollars a year, but only for my life. We talked it over with her when she made her will. She wanted to give it to me out and out, but James said he could provide for us himself, and that it would look better to let it go

back to her husband's folks. She wouldn't quite do that, for she did not like them, so it was arranged that I should have the use of it first."

"But is that all? Warren thought some property had been deeded to you some years back."

"Not that I ever heard of. What difference would that make?"

"Only that if the claims should cover all the rest of the estate, or even go beyond it, there would still be something left for you and Kitty. Your private means would not be liable for your husband's debts."

Mrs. Danforth remained silent, but her face took on a new shade of thoughtful anxiety.

The best and the worst aspect of affairs came alike speedily to the surface. Against the dead man personally there were, as the widow had supposed, no claims whatever. The business would be carried on by Mr. Warren for the benefit of the creditors during the legal delay before the estate could be settled, unless it could be advantageously disposed of beforehand. But the liabilities of the firm would demand the sacrifice of every thing, and might probably not be wholly satisfied even then. Still, it was thought that the loss to the creditors would not be very great in any case.

On the other hand, there was a deed conveying to Mrs. Danforth, but in trust for her daughter, a building in the business quarter of the city which produced a fair rent. This, however, both she and Katharine absolutely refused to touch, the former insisting, moreover, on selling her own house at once, in order to satisfy the claims of a widow who had begged the privilege, some years before, of putting her little property in Mr. Danforth's hands. She had drawn a higher rate of interest from his compassion than she would from the best bond and mortgage, but she made a great merit now of her confidence in his integrity.

"I trusted Brother Danforth," she said, with many

tears and loud complaints, "because I thought he was safer than the bank; and now to think I may have to lose by him after all! And other people, too, in the same box. The Lord knows whom one can trust nowadays."

Katharine was with her mother when this woman came.

"Oh!" she cried, with a keen, impatient anguish in her voice, "can't we do something, mother? Let us give up every thing. I can go to work and try to earn our living. Don't let any body talk like that about my father."

"And reason good," said the woman. "You that have been kept in school all these years ought to know how to do something by this time."

The two, indeed, were bent on paying, if not to the utmost farthing, at least to the utmost extent within their power. In vain Mr. Warren pointed out to them that it was to guard against such a contingency as had actually occurred that this provision had been made, and that, as it had been done at a time when Mr. Danforth had been perfectly free, they could profit by it with easy consciences. The widow was not to be persuaded.

"I knew my husband," she said. "He would turn in his grave if he thought that any body should lose by his fault. It was this he had in his mind when he told me to pay all. We will not touch a copper of the rent, and if it is necessary Katharine will sell it the day she comes of age. We will go to Aunt Jane's house—I have given my tenant warning—and we will live on what she left me. Anna Germain will be with us, and her board will help us out."

"But you forget," said Mr. Warren, "that if you should die Kitty will be homeless and penniless."

"I shall not die," said the poor woman, "or if I do it will be of worry because there were debts I did not pay as far as I was able. And Kitty is her father's child and mine. There isn't a drop of dishonest blood *in her body.*"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE September day had been close and oppressive, but toward evening a fresh breeze blew up. Little Mrs. Kitchener, whose genteel lodging-house commanded a fair view of Boston Back Bay from its rear attic windows, heard one of the doors on her third-floor landing swinging, with that perpetually recurrent jar of the bolt of the lock against the ward which was a torture to her sensitive ear. She heard now and then, too, a slight cough from the room just above that in which she was occupied with her children, and felt morally certain that one of her lodgers, in whom she took a special interest, was sitting, in his shirt-sleeves and a draught, beside his open window. She knew well that the monotonous noise which wearied her did not come from his apartment, for Louis Giddings was one of the men who remember the trifles which affect other people's nerves, and had, indeed, chiefly commended himself to her affection by a sympathetic susceptibility to annoyances which, taken in themselves, affected him but slightly.

"Daughter," she said, in the gentlest of caressing voices, to the elder of the two little ones playing at her feet, "haven't you a mind to save mother a long walk up-stairs? Go all the way to the top landing and shut the door that is ajar. And when you come down you may stop for a little while in Mr. Giddings' room, if he likes to have you. It is time to put Freddy to sleep. But shut his door if you stay there. I can not have you sitting in a draught."

Lily got up with great alacrity, her blush-rose face

and small but expressive blue eyes lighting with pleasure.

"I can tell him about my birfday; he'll be glad to know I was borned just five years ago this afternoon," said the little coquette, who had begun to "make eyes" before she was graduated from the cradle, and enjoyed few things more than a seat on the knee of Mr. Giddings and the freedom she enjoyed there of chattering at her ease.

Mrs. Kitchener was by no means the sort of woman one would have expected to find at the head of a flourishing lodging-house in a modest but intensely respectable quarter of the "American Athens." She was not even a Bostonian, nor, for that matter, a Yankee of any of the half-dozen varieties. The daughter of a New York Congregationalist minister long departed, and the sister of another at present settled over a wealthy Brooklyn church, and wealthy himself by virtue of his marriage with a rich and fashionable widow, she had been carefully brought up in the enjoyment of the social consideration which such professional ties usually insure. She married early one of those brilliant ne'er-do-weels of pleasing exterior, charming manners, kind heart, and weak will, of whom even those who suffer most through their instrumentality say, with a sigh, that they are nobody's enemies but their own. At the time of their marriage he had just succeeded to a modest patrimony, and was a lawyer by profession, though his practice was as yet inconsiderable. Lydia herself had nothing but her education, her social position, and a pretty face which had worn from childhood a prophetically patient, half-sad expression; so that the match had been thought a good one for both parties. But as the years went by, carrying with them piece-meal John Kitchener's property, which he neither made stationary by prudent investments nor added to by the practice of his profession—he never practiced any thing with persistence and success but a guitar and the coloring of success-

ive meerschaums—and bringing little except children, who flourished for a year or two and then faded, stricken, as it seemed, by some constitutional blight, Lydia's face grew thinner and whiter and more pathetic, while her husband's gradually assumed an unpleasantly suggestive flush and an altered contour which were eloquent of a growing vice still more fatal to prosperity than constitutional laziness.

A downward race is always rapid. Changes of abode, which always went from bad to worse; the pitiful shifts of a poverty which still clings fast to respectability; the pangs of an affection to which kind words and caresses are never wanting, but which hungers for the solid meat of genuine, unselfish manly care; keener still, perhaps, the repeated wounds inflicted on a heart above all things maternal—all these things grew so familiar to Lydia Kitchener that at the end of fifteen years of marriage it seemed to her that she had had a century of experience.

Things were going from bad to worse with her then, in all respects but one. She had at last a child who had weathered safely the perils of her second summer, and promised, if all went well, to be as perfect a picture of health as she already was of infantile beauty. The only possible brightness of the future seemed to her to center about that charming little head, and that was naturally a brightness already attended by its proper shadow, sure to lengthen as the years went on and brought wants which the cast-off baby fineries and other half-kind, half-scornful doles of wealthy relatives would be inadequate to supply. She had often pondered over schemes for helping herself, but had been deterred from trying to put any of them into execution, partly by the fact that their means had not until now been utterly exhausted, and partly by a scruple which possibly did more credit to her heart than to her judgment, but which forbade her to rob her husband of the responsibility of her support and the illusion that he did, in some inadequate manner,

provide for it. But latterly the pressure of necessity had forced her into burning her candle at both ends, spending her days in the care of her house and baby and half her nights in fine sewing, and depleting her vital forces much more thoroughly than she filled her purse by the operation.

At this juncture, however, a family council was held, the result of which was announced to Mrs. Kitchener by her brother.

"We have been thinking, Elizabeth and I," he said, "that things ought not to go on in this way any longer. We own a house in Boston, the lease of which has just fallen in, and you may have it, rent free, if you will go there and live. John's shiftlessness and drinking habits are impairing my usefulness very much here; and, besides, I don't want to see you either earning your living or starving under my very nose. The house is in a good neighborhood and has been used for boarders, but my wife thinks it would be easier and more respectable to let your rooms to lodgers. We will all take a hand in fitting you out and starting you, and if you can only manage to keep your own purse-strings after that I don't see why you shouldn't do well. All that John ever turns his hand to here he can quite as well do there, and you will probably be saved from fretting your heart out, as you are pretty evidently doing now. Halloo, little tot!" picking up the crowing baby as he spoke, and starting her on the road to Banbury Cross, "whose pink toes are these I see sticking out of your shoes?"

In the crisis of domestic affairs which she had then reached Mrs. Kitchener took not many minutes for deliberation. Fifteen days later she was settled in her present quarters, where all things had since prospered with her. Courageous and prudent, and defended by her love for her children from yielding too far to the encroachments to which her wifely affection would otherwise have made her an easy prey, she led a hard, laborious, but not unfruitful life, and

had begun to look back with more regret than ever to the little ones she had lost in earlier years. There had been times when the pangs of wounded motherhood were blunted by the reflection that life would have been still more difficult if she had been obliged to dread for her boys weaknesses like his own as their sole inheritance from their father, and to see her girls grow up in the want and shabbiness to which she had herself submitted without a murmur. But now, when the specter of debt no longer dogged her, when her daily bread, though plain, was never scanty, and for the two little ones still left to play about her knees she seemed to foresee a future of respectability and comfort, she sometimes wept bitterer tears over the memory of the lost than when she first laid them in their coffins. Even after settling here she had buried one, and, though she had borne another, new-comers, welcome as they always were, could never replace their predecessors in that soft, unforgetting heart. How many times had she mused with tears over the history of the patient patriarch, who after all his trials, died in wealth and peace, the master of flocks and herds more numerous than of old, and with children around him to close his failing eyes—children his very own, the fruit of his loins and the gladness of his heart. Did they ever drive quite out of his remembrance that fatal day when the terror-stricken bearer of ill news crushed him to the earth, saying, "Thy children are all dead, and I alone have escaped to tell thee?"

Mrs. Kitchener prayed daily for her husband's reformation, and told herself that she had never ceased to hope for it; and yet her friendly interest in the lodger to whom reference has been made was scarcely impaired by her belief that they exercised a not altogether salutary influence over each other. Mr. Kitchener entertained an affectionate admiration for Louis Giddings, which the younger man returned, mingled with a half-scornful, half-indignant pity.

Yet neither one nor all these shades of feeling were always strong enough to prevent his occasionally lending the other's weakness the force of a like example. Such occasions were rare, it is true, but now and then, when they had emptied a whisky-bottle together, and Kitchener had fallen into tearful penitence and Giddings risen to virtuous anger, the one would take high grounds as to the moral worthlessness of a man who could so neglect a good wife, and the other would swear between hiccoughs that Lydia was the best woman God ever made, and that he would have hanged himself from remorse long ago if he had not been sure she would die of grief for his loss. To the poor little wife, always planning ways and means to wean her husband from his habitual vice, the presence of this special lodger, with his brilliant conversational powers and his occasional excesses, sometimes seemed a danger which ought to be averted. But the remembrance of days when no such excuse existed, and the unacknowledged certainty that her husband's fault was the result of hereditary appetite unmodified by principle, and neither whetted by company nor allayed by solitude, came to the aid of a sympathy which was like divination, and which, from the time when Louis Giddings first came to her, had inclined her in his favor. He had fallen ill on her hands shortly after, and by the time she had nursed him through pneumonia, and petted him through the rather long convalescence that followed, she had also taken him completely into her motherly heart.

Somehow or other the conviction fastened on her mind that what he sought in drink was occasional forgetfulness and not the indulgence of an appetite. If he were happy, she reflected, he would be master of himself for good, as he is now for evil. And seeing him with her children, who adored him, intercepting sometimes the wistful glances with which he followed them in their plays, she often thought how well he was adapted to the rôle of husband and father,

and what a pity it was that he should be postponing it so long. She even laid little schemes for putting that happiness within his reach; she craftily invited one or two pretty girls on visits from her old home, and kept an observant eye on others in her new one, where, owing to the reputation of her father and brother, her standing had been determined, in church circles at least, more in accordance with her personal merit than her present circumstances. She had her labor for her pains so far as Louis Giddings was concerned. She found that he would not enter her parlor when there were young girls in it, though at other times his frequent presence there insured that of her husband so invariably that something of the domesticity of her early married life seemed to have revived with his entrance under her roof. Her wiles were so transparent that the object of them told her at last, in a jesting voice which had, nevertheless, a ring of intention in it, that he made of her an exception to her sex, all the rest of which he held in hearty detestation.

"I don't believe it," she answered in the playful way that had been natural to her in her girlhood, and which responded to his own mood in accordance with some subtle law of personality that marked him out among men as one who always evoked either love or hatred, the best qualities or the worst ones of his neighbor, but never left any one who met him entirely neutral. "You haven't the slightest resemblance to a woman-hater. I never saw a man more obviously intended to be the husband of a charming wife and the father of a brood of delightful children."

"It is a clear case of practical atheism, you think," he replied in a tone as light as her own, but rising as he spoke from the table, where he had thrown a heap of magazines and papers on his entrance, apparently with the intention of spending the evening beside her fire. "Come, Kitchener, I have an appointment down-town which I had forgotten. Will you walk?"

And Mrs. Kitchener saw neither of them again until late the next night. She was a woman not at all slow in certain varieties of mental arithmetic, and the result of her putting two and two together in this case brought her innocent matrimonial speculations to a definite end.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE object of all this disinterested and friendly solicitude was, in fact, a man whom most women would at once have regarded with approbation. Masculinity seemed to envelope him like an atmosphere rather than to be expressed by any single trait or collection of traits of face or figure; for, though tall and well made, his appearance was suggestive neither of redundant physical strength nor even of specially robust health. What the word womanly connotes when well applied to a member of the gentler sex—the presence, that is, in a noticeable degree of those mental, moral, and physical qualities which belong to the ideal counterpart and complement of man in his integrity, and recall the Biblical phrase, "To the image of God He created him, male and female He created them"—that the word manly signified when applied to him. Sanity and just proportion of body, vigor and clearness of intelligence, were what he suggested even to the dull of apprehension. For the rest, he pleased or displeased according to the beholder's point of view. Certainly he had been well hated, and would have earned Dr. Johnson's amity by his ability to return as well as to inspire that sentiment. He was dowered, perhaps, like Tennyson's poet, with "the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love." It must be said of him that he had too little tolerance for intellectual weakness, coupled with too great respect for merely intellectual strength, and was, like the rest of us, in a liability to mistake the touch-stone of personal antipathy for an infallible and generally applicable test of excellence. Yet he was an essentially

There came over him in the course of his senior year a change so marked that it attracted general observation. The actual facts in the case never became public property, but the most usual version of them set forth that during the previous vacation he had gone up into Canada, where his mother's family originated, and taken a position as teacher, with a view to remedying the constitutional collapse of his pockets. There he must have fallen successfully in love, for when he returned in the autumn a new and peculiar sort of interior brightness seemed to shine through him, as if his heart were suffused with a happiness that irradiated him unaware. He was a long-limbed, slender youngster then, of perhaps three-and-twenty, with a face full of noble and characteristic lines, a pair of deep-set, blue eyes under a square, broad forehead overhung by shadowy dark hair, and a wide, full-lipped, resolute mouth, capable of passion and of tenderness as well as of sundry other expressions less pleasant to consider. The brightness faded as time went on; but the more than customary vigor and purpose with which he was prosecuting his work this year did not slacken until some sudden and apparently terrible blow prostrated him. He rose from the bed of sickness, which nearly proved the bed of death, the shadow of his old self in appearance, and in mind and heart another person. His old geniality had given place to a savage and sardonic humor—or, since geniality would never have been the word to describe a disposition bright, indeed, and peculiarly open to gentle influences, but never prone to what Emerson calls "a mush of concession" in its most indulgent mood, perhaps it would be better to say that his natural shyness had deepened into impenetrable reserve, and a morose and ugly wit, which sent shafts that rankled, took the place of the kindly humor that had usually played as harmlessly as heat-lightning. This change passed, too, with time, as all things do, but that was the affair of years. The per-

manent alteration was in his will and his ambition, of which the one seemed to be extinguished and the other aimless. A brilliant success in any career which he might choose had been confidently predicted for him, though literature, pure and simple, seemed to be that for which his tastes and his abilities best fitted him. Contrary to expectation, he began reading law and was admitted to the bar; but having occupied his briefless interval with some hack journalistic and magazine work which gained him bread and so much reputation as was compatible with an invincible disinclination to avow authorship, nature and circumstances were in the end too many for him, and he was now, if not in his proper place, at least in one not many removes from it.

His old faculty for gaining friends and lovers among his own sex clung to him. Younger men—he himself was not yet thirty—attached themselves to him with that affection which the royal prophet affirms to be "above that of women," and which he probably preferred to it, for he not only did not seek but would under no pretense accept any of the ordinary courtesies of society. In entering the quarters where we find him it had not occurred to him that the keeper of a lodging-house could be, in any social sense, other than a sexless creature, whom he would regard much as a Southern lady regarded in the old days the brawny mulatto who waited on her, and in whose veins there ran, perhaps, the same blood as her own—as having, that is, neither eyes nor ears, neither brains nor heart, except as a beast of burden has them. But it was not in him to resist candor and kindness, gentleness and simplicity, and his nurse and he, after he left the chamber where she had cared for him and where her little ones had brightened his convalescence, were friends as fast as genuine sympathy and an appreciation which on one side was certainly limited by natural capacity, but was, at all events, thorough as far as it went, could make them. But the little girl was the

chief attraction of the house to him. Their moods, if it is not absurd to speak of the moods of a child of five, harmonized perfectly, and her flower-like, expressive face; her quick aversions and slow-growing preferences; her genius for what he called hitting the nail on the head; her willfulness, which matched itself against all obstacles; her stanch truthfulness, which already found a promise so sacred that neither threat nor bribe could induce her either to break or to renew one which she had found troublesome; above all, her love for himself, at once shy and outspoken, capable of feeling jealousy and trying to provoke it, had given her almost as strong a hold on his heart as if she had been his own.

As she slipped down from his knee and vanished from the room this evening, on the arrival of one of his friends whom she had not yet vouchsafed to take into favor, it was with a sense of ownership very like that which complacent fathers feel, that he said, with a laugh:

"That is a great little girl, Dick. A dozen years from now, if she keeps all her good points and takes on no bad ones, she will be safe and dangerous at once—if any woman can be."

"They are too safe when they are safe, and too dangerous otherwise—isn't that your theory? I found one of them when I went home last month, whom I have been thinking more or less about these half-dozen years, as likely to steer true between Scylla and Charybdis. I thought she had, too, when I found her sitting bare headed under a tree, looking as cool and fresh as a rose, and ready to 'enthuse' about Tennyson. But when I undertook to astonish her young mind and kindle in her breast a benevolent anxiety for my welfare by treating her to an artistic hodge-podge of science *versus* religion and what-not, such as we talk here occasionally, I didn't more than half like to find her receiving it all as coolly as if she had been all over the ground before me. She hadn't taken the con-

secutive steps, for want of opportunity, but there she was at the end."

"That is the way with the feminine intelligence, my son. Lily, now—she came up to-night to tell me that this is her 'birfday.' I chaffed her a little—told her I was surprised that a girl of her good sense should be so unwise as to have a thing she would be sure to regret one of these days. She understands chaff generally when it isn't too expensive, but she had evidently been cogitating on birthdays in general. 'Why, I *had* to have one,' she says; 'every body has to have a father and mother and be borned.' Then she looks up to the sky yonder and adds, in that musing little way she has, 'Except God. My mamma says He borned himself; and I can't—*I can't think* how He did it."

Both of them laughed, and then Giddings went on again:

"The kingdom of doubt seems to be a good deal like that other kingdom we read about. The babes and sucklings and ragamuffins of this century find their way into it and establish squatter sovereignty there before the philosophers and *savants* have quite made up their minds about the geography of the route."

"It is all right, I suppose; but, all the same, I can't quite reconcile myself to it where girls and women are concerned. I don't like them too strong minded or too strong-willed. Kitty Danforth, now—I showed you a picture one day in my room that I made of her when we were both children. It is no bad likeness even now. I used to fancy she would be every thing that is charming; ready to go as far as one would take her, and to stop wherever she was told. Her mother was just the sort of wife one would like to dream of growing old by—soft-voiced, modest, intelligent, self-contained, and always playing second fiddle to her husband without thinking of it. He died while I was home, and by an accident my father was present at the

deathbed. He came home and told about the scene that took place between her and her daughter just afterward. Miss Kitty stepped down from her pedestal in my imagination without great loss of time." And the speaker, whom the reader will have recognized already, went on to describe it briefly.

"That displeased you, did it?" asked his friend when he had finished. "What else would you have had her say? If a crisis of feeling or the presence of death does not force the truth out of one's mouth, you may be sure it is because it is never too near it under any circumstances."

"Bother truth! I would have liked to see her forget herself entirely and not add to her mother's trouble in that unnecessary fashion. Why shouldn't she have told her she would try to please her in every way, and got around it kindly? A woman whose mind is all angles and straight lines is as bad as a woman with sharp elbows."

"I loved my mother," said Giddings after a rather long pause. "I would have been glad to buy her a year or two more of life with ten out of the middle of my own. She was a good woman, brought up after the very strictest of all religious fashions, but she ran away from school and married my father out of pure love when she was hardly more than a child. They were as happy as two doves together until he was suddenly killed when I was about fourteen. He had no beliefs to speak of and had gradually unsettled most of hers. When she came to die she wanted to go back to them, and I was glad of it, for she was evidently timid. But she called me one day, just before the end came, and put the question plumply: 'You have read and studied more than I have,' she said; 'tell me honestly do you think there has been any revelation? Is there any certainty of a life hereafter?' What could I say?"

"What did you say?"

"I told her that to the best of my knowledge and

belief there was none. She would have had the priest in but for that, and I wish to God she had, for the look in her eyes gives me bad dreams yet. But truth comes uppermost when one is too hard pushed. For my part I would rather run risks with a woman who could speak it in a supreme moment like that than trust to the softness that thinks first of making things easy. Take my advice, youngster, and let them all alone. When all is said and done, what is the best of them but God's concession to man's weakness?"

"That reminds me," said the younger man. "I came here to give you a message that I forgot when I met you on the Common yesterday. It was near slipping my mind again. My uncle was called to Montreal the day after I reached Albany, and he stopped there and took me with him. You remember old Jennings, the millionaire, who used to live out near our place? He went back to Canada to end his days, so he said; but the first attack he had of gout in the stomach made him conclude to defer the end as long as possible, and, as a means to it, to send for Uncle Dick, who had pulled him out of several tight places before. He sent for a lawyer, too, and made his will. It was a friend of yours—Crawford. Do you remember him?"

"Yes; what about him? Wait a minute until I light up. It is getting too dark for comfort."

"I happened to get into conversation with him," went on Norton while the other was fumbling about for matches. "We talked about 'the States,' as they say up there, and the quarter I came from. He asked if I had ever met you, when I spoke of Boston, and when I told him that—well, in short, when I had said the usual thing about you, he asked me to tell you, when I had a chance, that Eva Lawton was dead. The message sounds mysterious, but there it is."

Louis Giddings was crossing the room as this was said, and at the moment passed so close to his friend's

chair that their garments touched. Richard Norton was a person exceedingly sensitive to impressions. He said to himself afterward that he could have sworn that he received a shock from an electric machine at that instant.

CHAPTER XV.

IF the first blow were really half the battle, as the misleading proverb says, the impulsive and the ignorant would be crowned with victory oftener than is actually the case. There was certainly no lack of vigor in the effort which Mrs. Danforth and her daughter instinctively made to ward off what they felt to be disgrace from the name of their dead, and their acceptance of poverty for themselves in its place was willing if not cheerful. But Mrs. Danforth had not only miscalculated the extent of her own forces, but had no just appreciation of those drawn up against her. Her life had lain hitherto in a little round of peaceful domestic duties, untroubled by grave responsibilities, and apparently as far removed from anxiety for the future as from want in the present. She was one of those fortunate people whose horror of debt is not based upon humiliating experience, and whose sensitiveness on the score of pecuniary honor seems to be hereditary and instinctive. Personal pride, which so often masquerades as principle, had been in her case its powerful auxiliary. She had been a pretty woman, and as aware of it and as willing to make the most of it as a modest woman may be ; yet, girl or matron, she had never seen the day when to owe for a ribbon or a gown would not have seemed to her an intolerable disgrace, beside which mere shabbiness must have sunk into comparatively small importance. Still, she had seldom been called upon to make the choice, even in the days when prudence

counseled strict economy; and of late years, although she had been saving and simple in all her household ways, she had been so through choice and custom and with no thought of any ulterior good to be attained in that manner.

Even now the privations entailed by narrow means would in themselves have signified little to her. Her husband's death, though unaccompanied by the present disaster, would probably have been the signal for a contraction in her expenditure which she would have explained to herself and others by saying that, as there was nothing more coming into the house, there was all the more reason why less should hereafter go out of it. The true explanation, however, was to be looked for in her nature rather than in her circumstances. She had an instinct for saving and going without, for pinching here and sparing there, and, in general, trying to make the half do the work of the whole, which bore as little apparent reference to any real or anticipated personal need as do the accumulations of a magpie. If to the trait which ill-natured people had sometimes called stinginess there had been added the faintest suspicion of self-seeking, Mrs. Danforth's character would have been an unamiable one. But her closeness in little things was more than outbalanced, if not by generosity in great ones, then by justice, so far as she understood it, to all the world and a complete unselfishness toward those she loved.

Though she looked long at a sixpence before parting with it for what she called superfluities; though she was fond of saying that enough is as good as a feast, and of reminding impatient Kitty that man's imaginary wants are far greater than his real ones, yet it was always she who bore the chief inconveniences of her small economies, and she was at least as lavish of her time and strength in the service of others as she was sparing in the use of money. The range of her sympathies was somewhat narrow and

her exterior cold, but the channel of her affections was by no means shallow.

The action by which she hastily despoiled herself of all that was her own under the stress of mingled pride, anger, and aversion, while more impulsive than almost any other of her life, was not uncharacteristic, although it represented what was least worthy in her. Nothing had been definitely ascertained as yet concerning either the amount of the firm liabilities or the extent of the available assets. There was still some reasonable ground for hoping that the defaulter might be traced and compelled to unload his booty. The law's delay imposed the usual restraints and afforded the usual protection to debtor and creditors alike, and justice demanded that one of the latter should not be preferred to another in case it proved that all claims could not be paid in full. Such considerations, and others which he thought not less important, Mr. Warren had resolved to press once more upon Mrs. Danforth's attention when he again visited her after an interval of a week or two which was intended to mark his sense of her unwisdom in rejecting counsel. Though he had heard her express her intention of parting with her private property, and knew she meant it at the moment, he thought it not unlikely that she would listen to reason in the end, and certain, in any case, that her determination was one which would require time to carry into effect. It happened, however, that an offer had been made for her house some months before, which her husband had decided to reject on the ground that the property was growing in value every year. Under the sting of pride, wounded by what she resented as an imputation on his honesty, Mrs. Danforth recalled this proposition and wrote at once to invite its renewal and express her wish to make the transfer without delay. The natural consequence came in the shape of a lowered offer, nicely adjusted to the anxiety indicated by her note, but Mrs. Danforth closed with it at once. Mr.

Warren found the affair already terminated, the importunate creditor paid in full, and the widow quite unconscious that she had been unjust toward either her husband's creditors or herself. She admitted her haste and folly when once persuaded that advantage had been taken of her need and her ignorance of business, but she could never be brought to see that she had failed in justice.

"Since it was my own," she said, "I surely had a right to do what I liked with it. I don't see that any one else is wronged merely because Peggy Smith's mouth was stopped now instead of eighteen months from now."

"Peggy Smith's mouth was safe enough," grumbled her brother-in-law, "without your emptying your own and Kitty's to fill it. I didn't know you were so fond of that gossiping old granny. I shouldn't have thought her your sort at all."

"Fond of her! She would never have been paid at all if my liking were the measure of her claim. I knew her long tongue of old, and I never wanted James to have any thing to do with her money. He has been paying her eight per cent. on her five thousand dollars for the last six years, because she made such a poor face and said she couldn't manage to live without getting as much as that. It was pure charity on his part. I have heard him say her account was twice as much bother as it was worth, for she was always coming to fuss about it."

"Charity of that sort is what I call arrant nonsense! And then to see you crown the whole thing out of sheer pride! I wouldn't have believed it of you. If it had been Anne, now—but, to do her justice, though she wastes five dollars to your one, she would know her own interests better than that. The truth is, Eliza, you don't seem to realize your own position at all. If Deyo can't be caught and squeezed every thing James owned will have to go, and it is doubtful whether the claims can be fully settled even then. There are new

ones coming in still. I have nothing to say against that, though he was as clearly victimized as any body. But it is all the more reason why you should have held on to all you were entitled to. It is very easy to talk about living on nothing a year, refusing the rent from Kitty's house and selling it as soon as possible; but what good will it do? If every thing could be cleared up in that way it might be different. But how are you and she to manage? Is she fit for any thing? Has she even finished her schooling yet, supposing she thinks of preparing herself for teaching? One thing you may rest assured of, and that is that I shall use the authority given me under her father's will to prevent her income from being disposed of except for her benefit. Do use your common sense. A month ago I would have said you were as full of it as an egg is of meat, but here you go about like a madwoman, mopping up debts with which you have no more concern than I have, and which, as a matter of fact, you have no right at all to pay until the whole business is straightened out and every one put on an equal footing."

Mr. Warren spoke in a tone which nothing but his habitual respect for his sister-in-law and his real sympathy in her bereavement saved from being a snarl. Mrs. Danforth hardly noticed it. What he had been saying, though not really new to her, for he had urged it in less forcible terms before, seemed for the first time to assume significance in her mind. Her ignorance of affairs beyond the limits of the four walls of her household was what one would call almost childish in these days when women assume and carry without difficulty so many more burdens than of old. But she belonged to an older generation—the generation in which, while man and wife were one in the eye of the law in all that regarded money, the man was the one assuming all responsibilities, controlling all income from whatever sources it might arise, even when it was the woman's inheritance or the product of

her daily labor, and at liberty to divert it to his own purposes by his pleasure during life and by his will after death. Neither Mr. Danforth nor his wife had ever questioned the justice of the law in this regard, she because she had never suffered from its pressure, he because he was accustomed to take things as he found them, without investigating very closely what seemed to have no special personal bearing. His wife had nothing when he married her, and when, after her sister's death, the whole modest income arising from her mother's property fell to her share, he had drawn it, invested it, and kept no private account with her, simply because they were actually one in mind and heart as well as by virtue of the legal fiction, and had no divergent interests. Her acquaintance with business forms up to the last week, when she suddenly enlarged it at her private cost, had been limited to what she called "signing off" on various occasions when her husband wished to dispose of real estate. This would be an ideal state of things if men were always just, women always reasonable, and death never uncertain. Otherwise it has its drawbacks.

"You seem to forget," she said, after a meditative pause which the nervous working of her fingers showed to have been an anxious one as well, "that I have something from Aunt Jane's estate; I thought we ought to be able to live on that. There is the house, you know, besides the money. This one is larger than we need, and, besides, it isn't ours. He talked of buying it next May when the lease runs out. I shall move up on the hill then."

"I didn't forget it; but what does it amount to, after all? Who assures you that you will live until next May? There is absolutely nothing now that you can count on for Kitty except the house you declared the other day you wouldn't accept the rent of and would sell the moment you were able, unless every thing could be cleared off without it. I don't

say there wouldn't have been a sort of unnecessary justice in that, since, after all, it came from James. At all events, I shouldn't have disputed much about it with you if you hadn't gone and upset every thing by putting out of your hands the most valuable piece of real estate you had, and the only one that had absolutely not the shadow of a claim upon it. Commend me to your unreasonable sex for undoing whatever man can do to protect you from yourselves."

Mrs. Danforth made no immediate answer. She was trying to adjust her mind to the new horizons which were opening out before it. Life was evidently to be less plain sailing hereafter. Her first venture into the open sea of business, with no other chart than the apostolic injunction, "Owe no man any thing," seemed to have been disastrous. She had accepted as true, and acted upon to her own loss, statements which, as had just been shown her, must have been intentionally misleading. Fresh from such a lesson as had been taught her at her husband's bedside, she had taken counsel of pride rather than of prudence, and run the risk of leaving her daughter empty-handed on the threshold of young womanhood rather than bear awhile the sting of an imputation that she knew to be unfounded. To tell the truth, she was, perhaps, judging herself over-harshly now, for the thought of herself or of Katharine, except as guardians of the dead man's honor, had not so much as occurred to her up to this moment, partly because the effects of the lifelong habit of being cared for had not yet had time to wear away, and partly because of an ingrained belief which, if it had taken shape, would have done so in the words: "I have been young, and now I am old, yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." But Mr. Warren's manner, never aggressively amiable, and his words, which seldom lacked directness and were in this instance expressly intended to put a stop to any further independent action on her part, were just now a sort of

embodied conscience, which made articulate certain misgivings as to her motives which she had felt from the first, but silenced by an appeal to general principles which commended itself to her mind without justifying itself to her instinctive self-knowledge.

"What am I to do, then?" she asked, breaking a silence during which her companion had been measuring the length of the parlors with impatient strides.

"Do? Nothing at all. If any one else comes bothering here with bills and claims refer them to me. You have money in hand; you know pretty well what you can count on. Cut your coat according to your cloth, and wait until affairs are settled. What do you propose to do with Kitty? She is likely to have to earn her living in the end, as far as I can see. I have nephews and nieces on my own side of the house, and I don't know that there is any one else to look to. No," he went on, interrupting with a gesture the disclaimer he read on Mrs. Danforth's face, "you don't need to tell me you never expected any thing from me. Is she to keep on at school? Teaching is all she will probably be fit for, unless she marries."

Mrs. Danforth sighed.

"Little good her schooling has done her thus far. He would have it, though many a time he was told it was an injury to her. But I don't see what else she can do now but go on and finish."

Mr. Warren understood the mother's sigh and had a partial sympathy with the feeling that extorted it. There had never been much love lost between him and his niece. She had regarded him from childhood as a sort of domestic tyrant who very often spoiled by his fretting and fault-finding the pleasure she would otherwise have taken in his household; and he, whose good points did not include tenderness to women or fondness for children, had been passively cognizant of her verdict on him. He had been present also on the night of her father's death, and the reply that had been wrung out of her then by her mother's appeal

had shocked and at the moment almost terrified him. Though not a professed believer in times of health and prosperity, he was a potential one at all times, and very near the verge of actuality in that regard whenever sickness or death approached him nearly.

"I don't approve of so much learning for women myself," he said. "If she had been mine I never would have given it to her. But you can't come to a halt in the middle of a bridge. School has begun, hasn't it? I see the girls going by the house in the mornings now."

"Yes; last Monday. Anna went up to be examined, but Kitty hasn't been yet. I hadn't made up my mind what to do about it, and then she didn't seem to want to, either. She has been moping around so ever since—" Mrs. Danforth sighed again and left her sentence unfinished.

"Better send her at once, then, and get her mind off her trouble. And talk things over with her first, or let me do it. Somebody has been telling Anne that she has never half worked at school. Let her know that it isn't for her amusement you pay her bills now, but that she must consider that she is learning her trade."

"And have I really nothing to do?" asked Mrs. Danforth, rising from her seat in the corner of the sofa as her brother-in-law picked up his hat. "I thought I was one of the executors of the will. There was a man here yesterday afternoon when I was lying down, but Kitty did not call me. He left word that he wanted to speak to me about buying the mill, and that he would come again."

"James Thomson, I suppose. I heard he was thinking of it. Send him to me. You are joint executor with me, but I think it would be safe to confine your share of the duties to signing your name when it is necessary and taking your percentage when things are settled. Your lawyer and I will atttend to all the *rest. You* don't seem to shine as a woman of busi-

ness. And you need rest," he added in a softer tone, as, coming out into the porch, the daylight struck upon the widow's face and revealed the changes in it.

She had been a young, fresh-looking woman a month before, bearing her fifty years so lightly that every body would have credited her with a decade fewer. But now grief and anxiety had already graven deep lines in her forehead and about her eyes; her cheeks were thinner, and her hair, where it waved back from her temples under the cap—which, except for its altered material, was such as she had worn for twenty years—was grizzling fast.

"Take care of yourself," he said, pressing her hand lightly, "and remember that you stand now between Kitty and the world."

Poor mother! That was the one fact with regard to the immediate future which it would have been well for her peace of mind that she should forget.

CHAPTER XVI.

WEEKS and months went by, and life with Katharine and her mother slipped gradually into newer grooves. As the business was wound up the outlook for the creditors grew brighter, and even promised to be less absolutely disastrous for the family than was feared in the beginning. Mr. Deyo had been neither a long-premeditated rascal nor, as we count greatness in such matters nowadays, a great one. Though no trace of him was come upon; and Mr. Warren never enjoyed the longed-for pleasure of making him feel the edge of his tongue and causing him to pay for his roguery in person if not in pocket, yet the latter could hardly have been sufficiently well lined to insure that his life should compensate in some fashion by its evident outward prosperity for its interior dissatisfaction. "What exile from his country can fly himself as well?" is a line which, if not expressly invented for absconding defaulters, at least fits admirably those minor knaves whose consciences have been quickened by their training and associations, and whose opportunities to violate them have borne an inconveniently small proportion to their inclinations.

The final settlement, however, was still far off when Mrs. Danforth began to put in operation certain changes in her way of living which her exaggerated fears as to the situation seemed to her to render necessary. Anna Germain was soon chafing against them with a visible and growing irritation, and even Katharine, who sympathized with her mother's motives *without fully* comprehending all of them, thought

them overstrained and needless. Their tenure of the house they occupied was too near its term to make it worth while to share it with another family, as Mrs. Danforth at first proposed ; but the head of faithful Hannah, who had been with her for many years, fell straightway into the basket. She begged to stay at lowered wages, but her mistress, in the first access of her economic fever, refused to listen to the proposition.

"But I have almost nothing to do," she persisted in replying to her daughter's early entreaties that she would spare herself. "There are only three of us, and you two are away the best part of nearly every day. You may help me in the mornings and evenings if you like, but I can not afford Hannah's keep even, much less to pay her wages."

And to Anna, who undertook some time afterward to demonstrate to her by dint of figures that her income would cover the actual outlay, even were the latter increased so as to include this expense, she replied, with a touch of irritability that was new to her :

"I don't care about your arithmetic. I never kept accounts myself, and I never mean to, but I know enough to put the quarter's money into my bureau-drawer and take good care that it isn't all gone before the next comes in. It is all very well for you children to talk. He that knows nothing fears nothing. The more I can save the better I like it."

"But why, mother?" urged Katharine, when they were alone together later on. It was near the holidays; Anna was spending the evening with the Whites, with whom she had quickly cemented an intimacy from which she apparently derived much pleasure, and the mother and daughter were sitting on either side of a not very brisk fire built in the dining-room grate. "Can't we really afford to light the furnace fire and have some one to attend to it? Anna is vexed, I know, about that and other things. She says the parlors are so cold always that she is ashamed to take

people in there when they call upon her. And then she does not like to study down here. It makes no difference to me—I have always been used to doing my lessons beside you; but she told me the other day that she thought she paid enough to have a right to be made comfortable."

"I thought we might avoid that expense this winter," answered the mother, with a despondent accent. "And what does she want with so much company—she that pretends to be a school-girl still? I don't like those Unitarians coming to the house any way."

"They are pleasant people," said Katharine, "and her relatives; you can hardly shut the door against them. It isn't her comfort I am thinking of so much as yours. Hannah went away cross, but she would come back at a word, I am sure. You ought not to be here alone all day, and I can not help you as I would like because I have a great deal to do in school this year."

"I don't need Hannah. With a woman to scrub and wash and iron, what occasion is there for another pair of hands and another mouth? When all is done my time still hangs so heavy on me that I should be glad if I were able to undertake every thing."

"But," insisted her daughter, who had been primed that day with arguments from various sources, "I am afraid it is wearing on your health. Do you know that you are actually beginning to stoop a little and that your hair is almost white already? I met Uncle Horace out by his door this morning. He gave me the money for my school-bill, and told me he was going to pay the taxes on the Pearl Street house, and would come to-morrow to give you the balance of the quarter's rent. Aunt Anne came out, too, after he had passed on; she thinks you are wearing yourself out."

"Oh! Anne, indeed! What does she know about *it?* Thank Heaven, I was never one of *her* sort—*groaning and* grunting at death's door one day, and

up and gadding the streets the next! There is no use in talking about it, child. We don't know yet how things are coming out. The Pearl Street house may have to go after all, and then there will be nothing but what little I can lay by to make up to you for the one I sold last fall."

"Ah!" said her daughter, kneeling down on the rug before the fire and putting her hands upon her mother's where they lay idle in her lap, the fingers working nervously, as was their habit nowadays, "you talk as though you were sure of living forever, or as if I were likely to need what you can save. I shall be able to earn something for both of us in a year or two. Professor Mitchell says I must keep on and take the post-graduate course, if I think of teaching."

Mrs. Danforth sighed again, but made no answer. Her thoughts were traveling so far into the future, and her anxiety to live for her child's sake was so great, that the burden of responsibility and nervous worry was really wearing on her to an extent of which she was quite unconscious. She had always enjoyed singularly good health, but she owed it, in a measure of which she was naturally unaware, to the peaceful and even tenor of her way of life. She had neither muscular strength nor powers of sustained physical endurance, and, though the household tasks she now assumed for the first time were not heavy in themselves, they were adding the little strain under which she might some day suddenly succumb. But of this neither she nor her daughter had any suspicion. The latter, although her solicitude was real, still spoke under the impulse of affection rather than of actual fear, while the mother, rightly attributing her frequent languors to their first source in her anxiety and grief, knew too little of herself to suspect that her mental troubles were reacting on her body, and that she was abetting their insidious attack upon her vital forces by the slight but constant privations to which she daily subjected herself. But when she fell down in a

dead faint one morning in Christmas week, just as they were about to sit down to a late breakfast, the family doctor put his hand at once on the real difficulty. Both she and Katharine were alarmed beyond measure, each of them seeing a "stroke" in the attack, though neither owned her suspicion to the other.

"Not a bit of it," said the doctor; "there is nothing in the world the matter but nerves and stomach. What do you eat nowadays? Bread and coffee, bread and tea, gingerbread and pickles and preserves! These girls don't owe their red cheeks to such trash as that, I'll be bound. And how often do you take this hearty food? Humph! I thought so. Where is Hannah?"

Katharine explained the situation. The doctor, an old-fashioned practitioner, who had not yet given in to the custom of written prescriptions, measured out a dose or two from the wallet he always carried, and then beckoned the girl to follow him from the room.

"From all I can make out," he said, laying a heavy, kindly hand upon her shoulder as she stood beside him in the lower hall over the closed register, "there is no necessity for your mother's either starving or worrying herself into her grave." He pushed aside the grating with his foot as he spoke, and a blast of cold air came rushing up. "Freezing herself too, eh? Well, there is no need of it—but that is what she is doing. She is nothing but a bundle of nerves, and those of her stomach are very properly rebelling against her treatment of them. She has no occasion for medicine, though I have humored her with a taste of rhubarb and magnesia. What she wants is beefsteak, regularly and often. She is growing too old now to begin playing tricks with herself. And it seems to me that Hannah would come cheaper in the end than another tombstone."

Thoroughly alarmed as to her health on one hand, and somewhat reassured on the other by the reports *brought by her* brother-in-law, who had been able to

dispose of the mill property on unexpectedly advantageous terms, Mrs. Danforth gradually relaxed her rigors. Hannah reassumed her familiar place, and, although the house was still the house of mourning, it began to put on a more cheerful air.

It had seemed to Katharine, in the first few weeks after her father's death, that life could never again wear so bright an aspect as before. Until he was gone she had never realized how intimately he was bound up with her existence. The wrench seemed at first to tear her heart in twain, and afterward to deepen and make more painful the doubts and fears which until then had possessed only a speculative interest. What had become of her father? Where was he? He had believed in and hoped for a life beyond the grave, but his belief was in itself no warranty, and he had failed in his effort to communicate it to her. The fountain of her tears was sealed up by the weight of her agony as she beheld him in the death-throe, but it began to flow again when she awoke from her first troubled slumber afterward. Urged by an irresistible longing, she arose from her bed and slipped noiselessly, lamp in hand, into the room where they had laid him. The watchers were drowsing in the adjoining parlor, and the folding-doors between the two were closed. The cooler airs of approaching dawn breathed through the bowed window-shutters, and the faint chirp of a half-awakened bird came in now and then from the garden, but it was still dark. The daughter stood alone beside her father, regarding through her streaming tears the face stiffened and contracted into the painful unfamiliarity of death. And her heart first, and then her lips, called him, begging vainly for light on the great mystery:

"If there is another life, and you are able, come back and tell me!"

As she said it she sank down on her knees beside the stretcher on which he had been placed to await the undertaker's visit in the morning. Her voice did

not rise above her breath, but she waited after she had spoken, half fearing, half hoping for an answer. There passed through her mind at that moment a familiar verse from St. Luke's Gospel: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rise from the dead." Then there came a strong gust from without, the fore-runner of a rising storm, which in another moment broke overhead with sudden violence, and the flame of her lamp was extinguished. An instinctive, unreasoning fear fell on her, and she fled to her chamber, chilled through with terror, although the summer night was warm. It was an experience, which, naturally enough, she never spoke of, but it haunted her memory and for a long time colored all her thoughts with a somber hue entirely new to them. Sometimes she awoke suddenly at night to find herself in a state of hushed and awed expectancy, as if the stillness were on the point of becoming vocal, or had just been disturbed by a voice that called her and then sank back into silence. But by degrees these feelings wore away. Youth reasserted its empire, and gradually she reconciled herself to the altered aspect of life and began to take new interest in it. She would never forget her father, for her heart, which seemed inconstant elsewhere, paid a homage to the great natural ties as unerring as that which a stone yields to the law of gravitation. But youth seldom lingers long beside a grave, even when it is the grave of kindred and beloved youth. To that of age it brings regret and love and memory, and passes on.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CONTEMPLATIVE saint of the middle ages, favored with an abundance of divine revelations, says that there was but one among them all which she was inspired to commit to writing, as having, presumably, a wider than merely personal bearing. It was to the effect that God will take away His light and grace from those who, being brought immediately to their internal Master, are so ungrateful as to forsake Him and betake themselves to an external one. It would seem natural that in this crisis of her experience, when her heart, softened by grief and longing, felt more than ever the need of some adequate support and consolation, Katharine should have reverted to her earliest attraction, the chief obstacle in the way of following it being now removed. Had it returned she might probably have done so, but it did not return. The short and easy road to peace had been opened to her youth, and she had thought herself justified in delaying to enter it. Now, if she ever reached that goal, it would be by the path of difficulty.

The winter which followed Mr. Danforth's death was naturally a quiet one. It had, nevertheless, certain distractions which made it seem almost gay to Katharine, who had hitherto led a nearly solitary life at home. Her cousin's presence alone had that been all, would of itself have made a sensible difference. But Anna, who knew that her stay in the city was measured by a few brief months, did not feel that she had a sufficient share in the family trouble to make it either necessary or becoming that she should avoid society. Her relations with Mr. White's family were

such as to gain her easy access to a circle of cultivated people with whom she exchanged calls and visits. The Unitarians were, like the coneys, "a feeble folk" in point of numbers, but they believed themselves to possess, and were, indeed, generally credited with, an amount of intelligence and general culture which would have amply "furnished forth" several orthodox congregations, if divided among them in the ordinary proportions. "It is not numbers but weight which tells," was a favorite aphorism of the Rev. Arthur White when he surveyed his own meager audience or beheld the crowds which sometimes poured out of an evening from a shouting revival meeting. "If one is to count noses," he sometimes reflected further, "the hod-men and coal-heavers and servant-girls that throng the cathedral even on a rainy Sunday morning, would put us all to shame. Quality, not quantity, is the test where brains and influence are concerned." Mr. White was a small, fair man, with a refined, intellectual face and a head disproportionately large—his "bodily presence," indeed, like that of a far greater man, with whom nevertheless he flattered himself that he possessed some other points in common, being somewhat weak, though his speech, in the matter of fluency, grace, and plausibility, was by no means contemptible. Had he been the most orthodox of the orthodox his personality would still have colored his reflections on delicate topics where brains and muscle fell or seemed to fall into opposite scales. Perhaps this is as good a place as any to remark that Anna Germain sympathized entirely with him in this respect, as in some others. She shared, for instance, to an extent that surprised Katharine the first time she had an opportunity to observe it, his doting, parental admiration and fondness for his motherless daughter, a badly-spoiled little creature of some three years old, to whom his widowed sister, who was likewise his housekeeper, played the part of temporary mother.

Mrs. Danforth, whose sense of decorum and whose

feelings would alike have prompted her to keep her house shut up and her parlors shrouded in funereal gloom, in which the rare, infrequent caller would have felt subdued to hushed tones and melancholy smiles, was not at all pleased to have this programme interfered with. As a matter of fact Anna's visitors were not sufficiently numerous to have called for much remark had their quality been different. That was a point on which Mrs. Danforth was as sensitive as the Rev. Arthur White himself, but their standards were naturally unlike. She had a horror of Unitarians, as she had a feeling very near akin to contempt for Universalists, and that her door should ever be darkened by a minister of either objectionable sect was a bitter dose to her. She felt herself powerless to interfere after her first essay to do so, the manner of her young cousin, which ranged between extreme though somewhat condescending gentleness and a brusqueness which was almost rude, having effectually deterred her. But she promised herself that no real or fancied family duty should ever again induce her to take a stranger within her gates. She was not the first person who has thought it worth while to shut the stable-door after the horse has been stolen.

At first Katharine rarely met her cousin's friends. But the girls occupied adjoining chambers, their talks at night were frequent and took a wide range, while the books that Anna brought to her notice were of a sort that greatly interested the younger girl. She had read much rather than widely hitherto, poring over her favorite authors until she knew them by heart, and longing to make the acquaintance of others who as yet were only names to her. Mr. White's library, which was well stocked on very liberal lines, and to which Anna had unchecked access, enlarged her horizon in various directions, even while as yet she knew it but by hearsay or by occasional volumes which her cousin borrowed. Had the Browning Society been in existence at *that time* she would have been a thoroughly

qualified candidate for admission a month or two after her first acquaintance with *Men and Women* and *The Blot on the Scutcheon*, though she fell from grace in that regard later on. She made acquaintance, too, with Channing and with Martineau, and developed a tendency to grow sentimentally pious from the top down —a tendency which did not last long and was quickly superseded by a long-enduring admiration for Emerson's essays and an enthusiasm for the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose *Thoughts* became her pocket-companion and were to her much what George Eliot describes the *Imitation* as having been to Maggie Tulliver. They made their appeal, however, to her intellect and to her aspirations. Goodness of the Stoic type became her ideal, and she made great plans for crushing out selfishness, mastering emotions of which she had as yet only the vaguest notions, and walking manfully over heated plowshares, if need be, toward the goal of a purely theoretic perfection.

Toward spring her curiosity overmastered her disinclination to give her mother unnecessary pain, and she began visiting Mr. White's church and his library on her own account. The latter was by far the more attractive place, for the preacher, when he abandoned the graceful elocution with which he discoursed on the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, and kindred topics of a sort to which his new hearer was unused, and descended to logic and argument in behalf of the hybrid theology he had undertaken to set forth, made much the same impression on her as the teachers to whom she had listened all her life. She told him so one day, some weeks after their first acquaintance, when he found her poring over Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and advised her that it might be dangerous reading. Katharine was fast growing into a very pretty girl, with a face full of animation and of charming color. She lifted her head as he spoke to her, tossing back the loose curls from her forehead with a gesture very usual, and looking at him in a way that drove the little

lecture he had meant to read her quite out of his head and deprived her answer of its sting. A sting, indeed, she had neither suspicion nor intention of administering, her candor being still in that transparent stage in which she thought that truth, at least in matters of that sort, could have no personal bearing.

"Do you really think any book on the subject dangerous? I was in church last Sunday morning and heard your sermon on the miracles in the Gospels."

"Didn't it please you?" he asked with a smile. "You seem to have a criticism to make on it."

"Oh no! But I don't understand the distinctions you lay down between them. Some of them you seem to think are true, some possible but not probable, some owing to a sort of self-deception on the part of Him who wrought them or on that of the beholders, and some absolute fabrications. And yet you call yourself a Christian! It is more straightforward, it seems to me, to take a steady line and follow it, as Strauss seems to be doing."

They were very good friends, nevertheless, as a man of thirty and a bright but not coquettish girl of eighteen may be, and Mr. White, who had a natural desire to gain intelligent recruits to his society, made his house and himself as attractive to her as possible.

"The trouble with you thus far," he said to her at the close of their first long talk, "is that you have lived always with people on an intellectual plane below your own. We will try to remedy that hereafter. I quite understand your first attraction to Catholicism. Given the premises on which Protestant orthodoxy tries to build, and the most ordinary intelligence ought to see that the superstructure it has reared is an absurd failure. With the Trinity and the Incarnation at the bottom you can have only a cathedral and a tiara on top. An orthodox meeting-house, crowned with a codfish and a pumpkin by way of a weathercock or a symbol—take them which way you will—is simply laughable. But the bottom is as bad as the top. We

will change all that one of these days, though perhaps it behooves us to be gentle yet awhile with the elder generation. It has taken three centuries, you know, to get them even to their present level."

Mrs. Price was some years older than her brother, fair like him, but larger in feature and of buxom, matronly proportions. Her experience during her marriage and widowhood had been somewhat checkered, and she was a rather less enthusiastic believer in the perfectibility of her species than she had been in former years.

"Keep clear of fads, whatever you do," she said one day to Katharine, who had been an amused spectator of one of little Fanny's tantrums. "I wonder what Aaron Carew would think now of her prospects for growing up a saint and becoming the wife of our first black president! He advised holding that up to her as a reward of merit when he was here last week with Susan Anthony—quite serious he was about it, too. I begin to believe that there is nothing in the world like a well-grown whim for blinding the eyes and darkening the understanding. I began with them myself, and if poor Price and our baby had lived perhaps I should have been working on that line still. But seeing is believing, isn't it? This child's education began, you might say, before her birth, for my sister-in-law took such a course of gymnastics, and limited herself so entirely to oatmeal, wheaten grits, and tasteless messes of that sort in order to insure that the baby's bone and muscle should be of the most approved description, that she never lived to see the result; while as to Fanny, the grits seem to have got into her temper instead of her arms and legs, don't they? Now we are supposed to keep her on bread and milk and vegetables, without any salt except what she may absorb through her bath, and no sugar. I shrewdly suspect, however, that her fondness for black Dinah in the kitchen has some secret connection with the *chronic depletion* of the sugar-bowl, though I close

my eyes so as not to behold the iniquity. But when her father is worsted in a struggle with her, as he was just now, he takes refuge in testing and weighing her food, making sure that she has flannel next her skin and no pillow in her crib, and consoles himself with the certainty that if these essentials are attended to every thing else will right itself in due course of time. What does Miss Germain think about it, by the way?"

It was Katharine's first visit to the nursery—a casual one, which followed an accidental meeting with Mrs. Price near the latter's own doorstep—and Anna was not with her.

"My cousin?" she answered, innocently enough. "I haven't heard her express an opinion. I have a notion, though, that she thinks children rather troublesome comforts."

"Ah! There's one of her views, then, that she won't be likely to be called upon to change later on. You don't happen to know any of the Carews, do you? No? She is as like them as two peas in every thing but looks. She favors her father's people there, I suppose. They take life with tremendous seriousness, and after a cut-and-dried pattern of their own that is amusing to witness. Lizzie reminds me of a geranium in a pot—a self-conscious geranium, endowed with the power of snipping off its dead leaves, grubbing up about its own roots, and administering at the proper intervals the precise quantity necessary of tepid soap-suds. To see her get up at this hour and go to bed at that, read so much goody nonsense out of this book in the forenoon and do so many lines of introspective diary in the afternoon, and keep an eye on herself all the time to make sure she isn't straggling too far from the straight line of duty, is as good as a play. I'll wager she turns over in bed according to some preconceived idea as to the best way of doing it, and I know she carries a compass with her when she goes away from home, lest the

aforesaid bed shouldn't lie due north and south. She is afraid of being depolarized, or something of the sort, if she should get out of the electric current."

Katharine laughed a little at the picture, which was a slightly exaggerated copy of some things she had been watching at home, sometimes with a suspicion that a more earnest desire for perfection on her own part would induce a more persistent imitation of them than she had yet achieved, but oftener in a mood not unlike that of the present lively critic. Mrs. Price looked at her rather closely as she ran on after a moment's pause:

"It will happen one of these days as sure as preaching. She will forget her compass, or have a bad dream and mistake the foot of the bed for the head, and there will be the whole labor of a life undone in the twinkling of an eye. I hope you will take every care that no such catastrophe happens to Miss Germain while she is under your roof. The consequences would be more disastrous in her case than in Lizzie's, I fancy, for she seems to have inflammable materials in her make-up, while a genuine Carew is three parts oatmeal and the rest milk and water."

That some serious intention underlay this chaff was evident, but Katharine, having as yet no clew to what it was, looked so serenely unconscious that Mrs. Price dropped the subject.

"The best thing I know about the Carews," she went on again, returning to a different head of her discourse, "the only thing that shows real spontaneity and naturalness, is just the one that my brother likes the least. They have taken up with spiritualism."

"Yes, I know," said Katharine. "Anna used to tell me a great deal about the *séances*, and the communications she received while at their house, but latterly she rather scoffs about it."

"Oh! she is soundly converted to better views, I *know*. Arthur will have it that all that is not fraud in

the matter is pure self-deception, but for my part I know better. Have you ever seen any thing of it?"

"No; but I have a lively curiosity and an equally lively skepticism."

"Oh! so had I. There isn't a doubt of it that Arthur is quite right about there being an infinite deal of fraud in all the public performances and most of the professional mediums. What converted me was finding out that I was a medium myself. If I were a writing medium, now, there would be some use in it—that is to say, I could practice by myself for my own edification. But you can't regulate those things. I go into trances when I sit down at the table with any one who is sympathetic, and they tell me I say quite wonderful things. Of course I don't know any thing about it myself."

"I wonder if I am sympathetic?" said Katharine, with a rather shamefaced eagerness.

"I am sure you are. I saw it in your eyes the first time I looked at you. Would you like to try? If you don't mind my saying it, I had that in my mind when I begged you to come in this afternoon. We had a few sittings up at Dr. Lord's, and there were some quite wonderful things happened; but my brother is so opposed to it, and ridiculed the mediums so much, that for shame's sake none of his congregation will have any thing to do with it before him."

She drew up a little sewing-stand as she spoke, and, having taken the precaution to lock her sitting-room door, the two sat down opposite each other and the proceedings began. Katharine was quite in earnest and a little more anxious for results than she would have been willing to avow. Her heart beat at a more rapid rate than usual, and she was distinctly nervous during the rather long interval in which they faced each other solemnly and in silence. Presently Mrs. Price leaned back with her head against the wall, her figure took an easy attitude, her hands gradually

slipped from the table, her eyes rolled upward with a rapt expression and then closed. The great moment was evidently at hand, and Katharine's inward trepidation was redoubled. She waited in a growing anxiety, but the revelations were delayed ; Mrs. Price remained motionless and her eyelids ceased to flicker. Then her lips fell apart, and after perhaps a quarter of an hour of intense expectancy the long-wished-for sound issued from between them. The listener's ears tingled sorely when they caught it. It was the faintest, the most lady-like, but alas ! the most unmistakable of snores.

"Was I unsympathetic or was she sleepy ?" she said to herself, with a smile, as she slipped softly out of the room, leaving her hostess to her slumbers. The absurdity of the situation tickled her fancy so much that for a long time it was the most effectual of barriers against further efforts at investigation in that direction. In the end this sitting turned out to be only the first one of a series, but, as far as results went, it was not by any means the least interesting or important.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SCHOOL was to close about the middle of June, at which time both of the girls expected their diplomas. It had been arranged the previous summer, during Katharine's brief visit, that she was to accompany Anna home and be present at her Cousin Mary's wedding. Circumstances had changed the face of things so much since then that very little had been said about the project. Occasional reminders of it came in Mary's letters to her sister in the earlier part of the year, but Anna grew more and more thoughtful and silent as vacation drew nigh ; her home letters seemed to cause her some annoyance, and she no longer read out extracts from them, as had been her habit. Katharine, although not very observant on such matters, had a vague impression that her visits to Mr. White's residence grew less frequent, and that, while her own relations with Mrs. Price were as cordial as ever, a cloud had come between the widow and her cousin. On the other hand, Mr. White himself often dropped in of an evening, and Anna's attendance at church and Sunday school, where she had taken a class soon after her arrival in the city, was too faithful to admit of interruption from either sun or storm. But she observed great reticence about her private affairs, and Katharine was so much occupied with her own preparation for commencement-day that the last week of their life together had arrived before the subject of the visit was again touched upon. A letter in Mary's handwriting came by the last post one day, and Katharine, who was standing in the porch when it arrived, carried it up to her cousin's room.

"I wonder how a girl feels," she said, with a smile, as she threw it into Anna's lap, "when she reflects that she is signing her own name for nearly the last time? It must be an odd thing to sink one's own identity so completely as a woman must when she gives herself to a husband. I wish we were going down to the wedding, but mother has another touch of rheumatism coming on. If it lasts as it did in the spring we won't be able to leave home. Ten days from now, isn't it?"

Anna looked constrained, and for a moment made no answer. She fumbled absently with the letter, but made no attempt to cut open the envelope.

"You might come down with me," she said at last, after a silence which was growing awkward. "I wish you would—but—the fact is that Mary's wedding is put off again."

"Again? Poor Mr. Asbell! His name ought to be Jacob instead of Jonas. His Rachel is certainly worth waiting for."

"I don't know why you should pity him so much," said Anna, with a note of irritation in her voice; "they see each other every day, and have done so for years. He makes a great ado about being asked to wait a little longer, but some people never think of any body but themselves."

"What is the matter this time—or is it a family secret?"

"You will have to know it one day or other," Anna answered, with a perceptible embarrassment. "I may as well tell you now as any time, I suppose. I—to tell the truth—I am going to be married myself early in July. I thought we might have a double wedding," she went on with great precipitation, "but Mary has so many whims and old-maidish ways. You might as well try to unwind a clock as alter her mind when once she has got it all arranged to suit herself. She laid out the next year or two for me as if she were Fate itself, and when she found I was not going

to carry out the programme nothing would answer her turn but to wait at home another year and train my younger sister. It is simple nonsense! My father could find a housekeeper—or a wife, for that matter, if he chose. Anyway, I don't see that I am called upon to wreck my own happiness or interfere with Arthur's plans merely because Mary refuses to give up her whims."

"Arthur! Then you are going to marry Mr. White?"

"Where have your eyes been? We are going to sail for Europe on the fifth of July, and won't be back until September."

"My eyes?" said Katharine. "In my pocket, I fancy. And Mrs. Price and Fanny?"

Anna's face, which had relapsed into serenity after the fading of a very becoming blush, clouded up again.

"That is another nuisance! Mrs. Price has made herself excessively disagreeable. She thought she was snugly settled down for life when Mrs. White died and left that poor, dear little thing behind her. Arthur told her that our marriage would make no difference, but she has chosen to make herself so unpleasant that I think she will find two can play at that game. She isn't fit to have the management of a sensitive, delicate creature like Fanny in any case. Fancy! Arthur actually heard her threaten to slap her one day to make her stop crying. We shall leave her here with her aunt for the present, but I shall devote myself to her education when we come back."

"But poor Mary! And Mr. Asbell! Of course I congratulate you, and all that, but it *is* too bad. I'm sure you must think so. After all these years!"

Anna had torn open her letter while her cousin was speaking. It was very short, but Katharine could see by the failing daylight that her face darkened and grew troubled as she read it. She held it for a

moment as if about to tear it; then changing her mind, she passed it over to her cousin.

"It is her own fault!" she said. "If it were not I should be sorry for her. She has worn out even *his* patience at last. I always knew he was selfish, though. He would hardly speak to me last summer after it was arranged that I should leave home for a year. Some people never think of any one but themselves!"

"Dear sister," the letter ran, "my father wished to write to you himself, but I have persuaded him that it is better to let me do it. I showed Mr. Asbell your last letter on Sunday night, and told him that while my father was in such feeble health and the two little ones still so young I could not think it my duty to leave them to entire strangers. He made me very little answer, and was married on Wednesday to Sarah Frisbee. I hope God may forgive him and you, and that you will both be happy in your new homes is the prayer of your affectionate sister,

"MARY GERMAIN."

Katharine's eyes were moist as she looked up from the paper, but her heart was very indignant.

"May I never give any one occasion to make such a prayer for me!" she said. "I should be afraid to have it answered."

"Do have common sense!" her cousin replied imperturbably. "In the first place, she is well rid of a man who could act in that way, and, in the second, don't you think it more important that a man like Arthur White should be able to carry out his plans and settle down to a life of quietness, in which he will be able to do his best work and bring out all there is in him, than that a country farmer like Jonas should insist on marrying to-day instead of to-morrow? He is only twenty-six when all is said. I don't blame him half as much as I do Mary. I can't help it if she chooses to throw herself down before Juggernaut. My father ought to have prevented it. I talked the whole thing over with Arthur."

"And he would not wait another year himself? I am disappointed in him."

"Well—yes—he would, I suppose, if I had been very stiff about it. But he really needs this European trip, and the congregation insisted on his taking it. I think the doctor has prescribed it for his throat-difficulty. He would have gone alone—but—well, he thought, as I do, that Mary's carefulness is overstrained. A man with my father's money can always hire what help is needed, and Mary was to be close by in any case. Why should we have waited? I might never have had such a chance for culture offered me again. Of course I didn't believe things would take quite this turn. One comfort is that Jonas will sup sorrow for it. If ever a man was absurdly in love with a girl, he was with my sister Mary. I'll wager he has repented every minute since."

"But you are frightful!" said Katharine, rushing to the door. "Poor Mary! poor Jonas! I'd rather be in either of their places than in yours!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A CAMP in the New York wilderness. A clearing some fifty or sixty feet square, fringed on three sides by pines, spruces, and a variety of hard wood trees, extends on the fourth to the brow of a rocky cliff, at whose base lie the smooth, lustrous waters of a mountain lake. The ground is brown and fragrant with the leafy *debris* of countless autumns. Two rough log shanties, which by dispensing entirely with front walls manage to obviate any necessity for doors and windows, stand at right angles to each other, but with a spacious interval between. A huge rock in front of one of them serves as a fire-place, and not far from it a couple of planks, nailed fast to tree stumps, show that the camp has at some time been tenanted by Sybarites, unable to dispense with that luxury of civilized life, a dinner table.

On the bright August day to which this chronicle has led us, the afternoon sun, striking on the birch bark lining of one of these shanties, turned it a soft red, and lighted up the shining barrel of a rifle and some tin cups and other utensils flung carelessly in a corner. A fire of logs had been allowed to sink into a mass of glowing coals and a haunch of fat vènison suspended above it from cross-poles gave out an appetizing odor, responded to amicably by some speckled trout and potatoes sizzling together in company with a slice of salt pork in an immense frying pan with a long handle. A battered and blackened coffee-pot of generous dimensions flanked these on the other side of the rocky hearth, and the guide, a short, thick-set,

loose-jointed 'York State Yankee, seated on a stump at the entrance of the shanty, had a tin basin on his knees in which he was vigorously beating up with a wooden spoon a mixture of flour, water, and saleratus known when fried under the name of choke-dog. Part of the carcass of a deer, enveloped in its skin, hung from a neighboring branch, and a couple of hounds, tired from the chase and gorged with the result of it, lay in uneasy slumbers to windward of the fire.

In the other shanty a young fellow of three-and-twenty was stretched upon a bed of evergreen boughs, with a folded gray blanket by way of pillow. He had come in an hour earlier from a successful hunt which began before daybreak, and the volume of anatomical surgery to which he virtuously betook himself on his return had speedily acted as a soporific. An older but still young man, in a Scotch tweed suit and a broad-brimmed soft felt hat, drawn down over his eyes to shelter them from the slanting rays, stood at the edge of the cliff, with his back against a superb yellow birch, regarding the scene before him. The serenity, the loneliness of the virgin wilderness brooded over it. A mile or so to the northwest the long arm of Indian Point stretched into the lake, its thinned-out timber and a little deserted clearing near the extremity showing that man had at some time essayed to subdue it, but on the further shore, beyond the Point, the somber unbroken forest ascended from the water's edge to the undulating skyline formed by distant mountain-tops. Plane after plane of varying blue and gray and rose, they faded into a sky so full of light as to be almost colorless. In sheltered coves beds of lily-pads lay dark in shadow, or flushing into opaline hues where the light fell on them. The silence was almost oppressive, for it was unbroken by that multitudinous hum of bird and beast and insect which, except in the primitive forest, makes the stillness of the woods vocal and audible to the sensitive ear.

Presently the guide left his place near the fire and

also approached the edge of the cliff, inclining his ear to the left as he did so with the look that denotes intense attention. In another moment he raised it with an air of satisfaction.

"Thought I heared the dip of an oar while I was settin' yonder. They're comin' round here at the left of the island."

The other, whose senses had not been sharpened by wood-craft, also inclined his ear, but some seconds elapsed before he caught the sound.

"Who is coming?" he asked.

"Seein's tellin'! Hold on, though! That's Bill Wood's voice if ever I heared it. That means petticoats, I'm afeard."

"What do you mean by that?"

"He took old man Warren up into the Black River country last week. He comes once in a while by himself, the old man does, to look after lumber, but this time he's got two of his women-folks along. I reckon Bill counts on finding this camp empty."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Crowd up! There's plenty of grub and plenty of room. We don't stand on ceremony at this hotel. I camped sixteen once in these two shanties." Saying which he returned to his cooking. The other stood frowning, with eyes bent in the direction from which the rhythmic splash of the oars was now plainly audible, until the boat, sweeping into sight around the end of the island on which the camp was situated showed that the guide's penetration had not been at fault. Then he turned back with a hasty movement into the cabin where his friend was lying.

"Wake up, Dick!" he said in a tone which opened the sleeper's eyes at once. "Of all unlooked for nuisances here is the worst."

"What is the matter now?" asked Richard Norton, yawning and stretching his limbs, but not yet rising.

"*Get up and look* down yonder at the landing. I

move we row over to Wood's to-night and go back to Palmer's and civilization to-morrow."

"Before we have been here two days!" exclaimed the other, now thoroughly roused and springing to his feet. "That would be rather too much of a good thing. What's up?"

The boat was beaching as he spoke, and as he looked down the decline leading to the landing, his eye fell on a party of three whom their guide was assisting to disembark. All had their backs toward him, but the cause of his friend's displeasure was evident. One was a buxom, comfortable, middle-aged matron, if one might judge from her ample, well-corseted contours: another a tall thin gentleman, whose rasping tones were heard in some distinctly marital remarks addressed to the lady concerning the absurdity of carrying hooped skirts and long petticoats into the woods; the third a graceful girlish figure in a short waterproof gown and a broad straw hat, with a bundle of shawls strapped across her shoulders and a leathern wallet in one hand. She turned and glanced in his direction, and her familiar voice floated up to his astonished ears.

"I'm afraid there's some one here, Wood. I see smoke and smell meat roasting."

"That's nothing," drawled the guide, a fac-simile of his brother up above, only a trifle taller, a trifle heavier, a trifle more like a grizzly bear in his shambling, loose-jointed gait and the impression he gave of immense muscular strength. "There's lots of room to pitch the tent, to say nothing of the shanties. Hullo! Mought that be Lon Wood up yonder? Lend us a hand here with the duffle."

"Duffle is Adirondack vernacular for their traps," said Norton. "Come down, Giddings, and make yourself useful. I know that party. There will be no occasion for running away on their account."

He was down on the landing in another minute, his friend following more leisurely, with an air half-

reluctant, half-indifferent. There was a rapid interchange of greeting, the freemasonry of the wilderness making that of the elders less stiff and formal than it would have been elsewhere, while that of the two young people was unembarrassed gayety itself.

"Kitty!" Richard said when he turned to her and offered to relieve her of her burdens, "if ever by accident I find myself at the antipodes, or wrecked on an iceberg near the pole, I shall at once turn round and begin to look for you."

"No," the girl said with a laugh and a shake of the head, "take auntie's things if you like. Mine are strapped too tight to make it worth while: and as to my bag, it does not incommode me in the least; Uncle Horace's shoulders are stiff. He took the oars at the last carry so that we might be able to get into camp here before nightfall, and he has been aching ever since."

While Norton was possessing himself of Mrs. Warren's light *impedimenta*, Louis Giddings approached and was presented. A moment later, some accident of the ascent brought him into line at Katharine's side just as a projecting bramble caught in her drapery and held her fast. They had barely exchanged a word or more than a passing glance as yet, though each had heard the other's name with a certain interest born of reminiscence; but now as he stooped to free her from the tangled mass of greenery, their eyes met full and for an instant rested each in each with an unconscious self-revelation from which both drew back with the certainty that something new and unexpected had befallen them.

Katharine's emotions had been rare, thus far, and though they had comprised both joy and grief they had always worn familiar faces. This one was wholly new, and she was not given to self-analysis, though she brooded much on other things. No thought formulated itself at all, but *she felt that life* had somehow broadened all at

once, and that the future would be something entirely different from the past.

Louis Giddings, too, to his immense surprise, had suddenly felt the stroke of the enchanter's wand, and recognized it. But he was past his first youth, taught by bitter experience, and given to observation of others as well as to much self-depreciative introspection. What had been written for a swift moment on her ingenuous face as innocent and unguarded in its first response as Eve's might have been when Adam looked upon her in the Garden, stamped itself on his heart and mind at once. But if he had seen his image in that clear mirror, it was without vanity; with some sadness, rather, and a touch of quick remorse. Yet his tone was light as he finally tore away the clinging thorns and then held out his hand for the wallet, which the girl resigned as naturally and readily as she had just refused it to the friend of her childhood.

"This is an enchanted wood, Miss Danforth," he said; "the spirits of it are already putting out their arms to bar your entrance."

"What a pity!" she half sighed; "I hoped it was to keep me in it."

In front of them Mrs. Warren was toiling up the path with some difficulty, unburdening her mind to Richard as she went.

"We go to Saratoga usually," she was saying, punctuating her remarks with much audible respiration, "and Mr. Warren's sister Clarissa goes with us. But he has been coughing some lately, and the doctor persuaded him that camping out would be good for his lungs. There couldn't be a more foolish notion. Sleeping outdoors in all sorts of weather, tramping about and carrying loads like a mule, eating out of tin plates and putting maple sugar and no milk into your coffee! How that is to do any good, unless it's good to get your bones full of rheumatism, I can't make out. We asked my niece, for Clarissa wouldn't come, and I wouldn't be alone here with guides and

that sort of people. She is as wild as a hawk about it, though what pleasure she finds in it is a mystery to me. Thank goodness! we go home to-morrow."

"So soon?" answered Norton with genuine regret in his voice. "Why not stay here a day or two longer when the weather is so perfect? As you say, solitude is too good a thing to be shared equally with guides—though ours is an amusing fellow in his way."

"Did I say any thing about solitude? I couldn't have meant it, I am sure, for I never could bear to be alone. As to the guides, I suppose that depends on what you find amusing. Ours has kept Mr. Warren and my niece laughing, but I must say I couldn't half the time make out what it was about. It sounded to me like the 'crackling of thorns under a pot.'"

"That is severe," said Richard laughing. But Mrs. Warren appeared to have forgotten the other end of her quotation, and was plainly innocent of all malice in its application.

"We brought good appetites with us," Mr. Warren remarked as dinner was ending. "It took us a day and a half to come through the Eight Lakes to the Racquette, and we could not have done it even in that time if we had stopped to do any cooking on the road to-day. I don't pretend to be an old camper from Campersville myself, though I have slept in a tent once or twice before, but my wife is just no woodsman at all."

"When I was a young 'un," said the elder of the two guides, depositing a final platter of steaming choke-dog on the board, "my mother thought nothin' of rowin' down from here to First Lake to spend the day with her sister, and comin' back before night. When she crossed the carries she strapped me on her back, took the boat on her head, and slipped the stockin' she was knittin' in her pocket."

"How *can* you tell such shocking stories, Wood?" *remonstrated Mrs.* Warren. "Why, there are eight

of those lakes and five carries, some of them a mile long!"

"Fact, mum," retorted the guide solemnly. "That makes sixteen lakes and ten carries between night and morning, don't it? She was one o' them strong women they tell about in Scripter. Her name wasn't Sapphiry, neither."

Propped against a convenient stump after dinner, an air pillow intervening between it and her well-cushioned shoulders, Mrs. Warren lost her sense of general discomfort in one of present ease. The camp fire lighted up the faces of the group against the dark wall of forest. The dogs barked in their sleep, pursuing a phantom deer through dreamland. Katharine sat close beside her aunt, the most silent member of a group where all were gay and given to ready laughter.

"What ails you, child?" Mrs. Warren asked. "You have kept us all alive till now, and here you are as still as a mouse just when the rest are beginning to enjoy things a little. If we had had such a lively party as this, Mr. Giddings," turning to the young man as he approached from the other side of the fire, "I don't say that I might not have liked camping pretty well myself. But how you and Mr. Norton can manage to content yourselves all alone here with rough fellows like these guides I can't imagine."

"They are not such a bad lot when you come to know them. I'm not sure I haven't enjoyed Lon almost as much as the lake and the mountains. When he puts on that air of preternatural gravity he is assuming now, the odds are that he has something to say worth hearing. Have you noticed him, Miss Danforth?"

"Yes," she answered with a smile. "He has been on the watch for an interval of silence for the last five minutes. There! he has it now. He has been waiting for uncle to finish talking with Mr. Norton."

An uproarious burst of laughter came from the opposite group the next moment, caused by some

unheard witicism, and then Richard, rising, came with a smile still on his lips, to throw himself down at Katharine's side. His friend, who had apparently been contemplating a similar movement, sat down instead at Mrs. Warren's other hand. She was inclined to nod a little after her dinner, and conversation presently languished between them. The other pair was not so taciturn.

"I haven't yet got over my astonishment at seeing you here," Richard was saying when their voices became audible. "We called—or rather, I called at your mother's one day last week, but she was out; gone to class, Hannah said. The old girl looks as young as ever, don't she? She said you were out in the country with your uncle and aunt, so I gave up all hope of seeing you, not supposing you would return so soon. My vacation is rather limited. I want to stay here as long as possible, and I must give them a day or two at home afterward. We shall see you then, perhaps?"

"I hope so. We go home to-morrow. I doubt whether your surprise at seeing me is as great as my own at finding myself here. The whole thing was arranged so suddenly; at least my part of it and auntie's. And then it is all so strange and so charming."

"You find it so?"

"Don't you?"

"The fishing and hunting, yes. But you do neither I suppose. No more does Giddings, who also finds the life agreeable. I approve of it on sanitary grounds and I gratify an old passion of my boyhood, when I longed in vain to be a hunter with a rifle and leggings, like Leatherstocking. What pleases you about it?"

"Oh, every thing. Our camp last night, for instance, was pitched so that it faced a pile of mountains rising from the opposite shore—much as they lie over yonder, *only that the sun* came up behind them. I woke very

early, while the sky was all gray and cool, with the mists rising off the lake and curling into the hollows of the hills, and burning up afterward when the dawn came. I lay still and looked until all was in a rosy flush, and could hardly persuade myself that I was not dreaming."

"One's dreams are seldom quite so pleasant. Must you really go back to-morrow?"

"I really must, not having any option in the matter. We coaxed Aunt Anne through from Fourth Lake to-day on the solemn promise that she should have only one night more to spend in the woods. Besides, I am anxious about mother."

"She was quite well last Wednesday, Hannah said."

"Yes; but still she needs and misses me. She has grown old very fast since last summer. The thought of her is the only thing that interferes with my pleasure here, and the most astonishing part of the whole affair is that she ever consented to what seemed to her an utter absurdity in the way of an excursion."

"She took pity on me," said Aunt Anne waking up, "knowing that I was quite of her mind about it and unable to help myself. Kitty, would you mind going into the tent and seeing in what manner of shape Wood has disposed our pillows and blankets? You can't trust him," she added to Mr. Giddings, "with any thing but rowing, and carrying loads, and cooking, and things of that sort. When it comes to a question of real comfort, you have to attend to it yourself."

The tent was at the further side of the clearing, opposite the shanty which the friends had occupied, and which Mr. Warren was to share with them for this night. As she left it, Katharine turned toward the water-side. The full moon was midway in the sky and the night was almost as bright as day. The group around the fire was breaking up, and as the good-nights were being said, Louis Giddings once more approached her.

"And so your life in the wilderness comes to an end to-morrow?" he said after a word or two evoked by the scene before them. "I have an old friend who must be living near you."

"Yes; he married a cousin of mine this summer. I know him very well."

"Ah! Norton has been telling you about him?"

"No," said the girl, suddenly self-conscious, and turning back to Mr. Warren with a blush that the moonlight only half veiled, "I have heard my cousin speak of you herself."

It was late that night when Louis Giddings lay down beside the others on their bed of hemlock branches. He paddled about in the moonshine for a long time first, watching the drops of light fall from his oar blades, listening to the loons calling through the silence, listening also to the voices of his heart, his memory and his conscience as he had not often listened of late years.

> "Let me not to the marriage of true minds
> Admit impediments,"

he mused half under his breath as he stood at last on the edge of the clearing before turning in. He was not given to quotations, but this snatch of a favorite sonnet exactly matched his mood.

"What eyes the child has!" his thoughts went on, though this time they did not reach his lips. "If ever I saw a soul look out from its prison, I saw it when I met them first below there. What gave my own the right to meet it? For that it did meet it and was recognized, I know as I know that I exist."

CHAPTER XX.

MR. FENWICK RECTOR, late junior of the firm of Crawford and Rector, flourishing solicitors in the city of Montreal, but now sole heir to the honors and emoluments arising from several years of joint practice, was sitting alone in his private office in St. Francis Xavier Street one morning about a week later than the incidents just recorded. He was a middle-aged Englishman of the florid type, with a sleek, sandy head, a pair of prominent, light gray eyes, smooth, round cheeks to which no persuasion of the razor had ever been able to bring a beard, although his upper lip boasted a rather straggling mustache, and a general appearance of *bonhomie* and generosity which had a curious way of wearing off on prolonged acquaintance, and was said to be frequently belied by the nature of his business transactions. The time was drawing toward noon, and he was beginning to think of deferring further study of the brief he was preparing for an eminent Queen's Counsel until after breakfast. He had married a French lady not long before, and adopted from her the fashion of calling by that name the second of the three substantial meals which agreeably varied the monotony of his days. He was still occupied with his papers, however, when his clerk entered, bearing a visiting-card, and announcing that the owner of it awaited an audience in the outer office.

"Show him in," he said, rising himself and meeting his visitor near the door with an effusive air of cordiality which met with a rather cool response.

"This is a curious coincidence, Mr. Giddings," he went on, bringing his greetings to a close, and offering

a chair near the desk, at which he immediately resumed his own. "I was considering only yesterday what steps I could take to learn your whereabouts."

"Mine?" returned the other, with a look in which unmistakable surprise was blended with another less easily read, which might be disappointment or irritation, but was certainly not pleasure. "They are easily ascertained. I don't live incognito. Could not Crawford have told you?"

"Crawford is in China. Didn't you observe that the firm-name was changed?"

"I noticed it, of course, which is why I inquired for you. What is he doing in China?"

"Oh, Crawford is one of those people who are always falling on their feet! Modest merit like yours and mine may go unrewarded all its days, but his uncle Sir John Crawford, who is chief justice in Shanghai, managed to put a fat thing in the way of a queen's solicitorship at his disposal. He had some private affairs, I've a notion, that he wanted his nephew to attend to also. Crawford hesitated, too, about accepting it. I only wish such a piece of luck had fallen to my share."

"When did he go?"

"Early last spring. Can I be of any service to you in his absence?"

"I don't know," Giddings answered with a slight hesitation, as if balancing something in his mind. "You had some business with me yourself, I inferred from what you said just now. What interest had you in learning my address?"

"To be sure; I was forgetting it. Absolutely none for my own part, but one of the fathers from the college round in Bleury Street was in here yesterday to inquire for it. He had been advised that you were a friend of Crawford's, and thought he might find here some means of communicating with you. I drink *confusion* to the Jesuits every 5th of November," he *went on with a laugh*, "but on all other days of the

year I have no manner of unwillingness to do any good turn that lies in my power for them. This one didn't, and so I told him, much to his regret apparently. *Mais, vous voici!*"

Louis Giddings looked completely mystified.

"He gave you no hint as to what he wanted of me?"

"Not the slightest. They keep their own counsel, those priests. You are not going, surely?" he went on, seeing the other preparing to move. "Come home to breakfast with me. Our acquaintance was of the slightest, but I knew you pretty well through Crawford. You haven't told me, by the way, whether I can do any thing for you."

"I think not—unless, perhaps, you could tell me where to find the Lawtons. There is no trace of them in their old quarters."

"You might possibly find the old lady in the cemetery at Joliette, but hardly in presentable condition. She moved out of town some five or six years ago—shortly after her daughter went away—and died and was buried there later on. We had her affairs on hand—have them still, for that matter, though they are nearly settled now. The daughter is dead, too."

"Also at Joliette?"

"No. I don't know where. I had nothing to do with the matter personally. It was Crawford's affair, not mine. He had always been on friendly terms with them."

"But you are certain she is dead?"

"Well, live people don't usually allow all their inheritance to be handed over to charitable institutions, and that is what has been done with hers—a better disposition, I don't doubt, than what she would have made herself, if all the stories told about her were true."

"I wasn't aware she had any. They were poor enough five years ago."

"Yes, but they belonged to a good family on the

other side. A very considerable estate fell in to the old lady about six months after Miss Lawton's marriage. Here! we shall be late for *déjeuner*. Come up and see my wife and baby, and give us the latest news from the States."

But this hospitable invitation was refused on the plea of an engagement.

"You had better go around to Bleury Street, then," Mr. Rector advised as they parted. "Or shall I send Père Baptist your address and let him communicate with you by letter?"

"Oh! I will go and interview him. Whom must I ask for, by the way?"

"The superior, probably. Show him your strawberry-mark and tell him you are the long-sought-for. Do you know any of the fathers?"

"Never met one in my life."

"Take my card, then—here, I'll make an introduction of it. I don't know them very well myself, but it is always safe to look up a Jesuit who has put himself out to make inquiries for you. They don't usually trouble themselves for nothing. Sorry you won't go home with me. *Au revoir!*"

The priest who presented himself in the parlor of St. Mary's when Giddings called there an hour or two later in the afternoon was a person who gained at first glance the latter's instinctive liking, and that in spite of a well-marked predisposition against all men of his cloth. He appeared to be about midway between fifty and sixty, his thick gray hair, surmounted by the black beretta, giving him an appearance of age greater than would have been inferred from his robust, upright figure and smooth, unwrinkled face. Beneath a good but not noticeable forehead shone a pair of mild, sympathetic, kindly eyes, their irises curiously mottled with infinitesimal light specks which just saved them from being black, though they could lay claim to no other color. The face was strongly modeled, the lower part giving unmistakable tokens of that firmness

of will to be looked for in one who had learned both to obey and to command in the school of St. Ignatius. That was a reflection, however, which certainly did not occur to his present visitor as he arose to greet him. Louis Giddings was a man open to impressions and sensitive to an unusual degree to the slight tokens which betray character. His morning's encounter with the lawyer, not as satisfactory as he had hoped in other respects, had been, on purely personal grounds, thoroughly the reverse of pleasant.

"I detest the fellow's fishy eyes and his wet hands," he had said to himself as he left him. "Eat with him? I would as lief take dinner in an aquarium."

Father Baptist spoke very fair English, beginning conversation in that tongue, but afterward relapsing into his own when he found it understood.

"Properly speaking, though," he said, "there is no language nowadays that I can claim to speak well. I am a French Swiss by birth; but I came over to the United States so long ago that for years my French fell into disuse. I never studied English—picked it up as I could among my flock, Irish and German for the most part. I have taught very little in our colleges, having been set usually to more active work, so that my Latin is also somewhat rusty; and now since I have been here in Montreal I find my French is considered to lack some academic graces. We shall perhaps be able to understand each other by resorting to a medley of the three."

Louis Giddings laughed. He found himself thoroughly at his ease, not a little to his surprise. For an hour or more he had been looking forward to this meeting with an irritation which seemed now to have been absurdly misplaced. Even his curiosity as to what it could possibly signify had yielded to a present feeling of well-being which for the moment did not look beyond itself.

"We are not likely to deal in abstractions, I suppose," he said.

"With them, perhaps," the priest answered, with another laugh. "You will pardon me if I question you a little, but I have a matter of identity to settle first of all. Mr. Rector's card and your own are proof enough that you are the person I was seeking yesterday, but there is something back of that. Do you know any thing of your mother's family?"

"Not much beyond her name. She married my father when very young. I was born here; perhaps it may interest you to know that I was baptized here also—in this very church of yours, in fact, I have heard my mother say. But she removed to Massachusetts shortly after with my father. She seldom spoke of her own people."

"And her name?"

"Marie Gascoigne."

"That is sufficient. I have had occasion already to examine the baptismal register concerning the affair and your account tallies with it sufficiently to make further questions needless. There is nothing more to say except that a certain sum of money has been forwarded to me with instructions to pay it over to your mother's son. In what shape will you take it?"

"You come to the point with admirable brevity," Giddings answered, holding his open palm. "If it isn't too burdensome I might take it in small change and drop it in your poor-box."

"It won't overload you with this world's goods, I hope," Father Baptist retorted, with a smile, "but you will hardly enrich our poor-box with it, either. It is ten thousand pounds."

"You are not in earnest?"

"Absolutely. The money is deposited at present to my order in the Bank of Montreal. I have no further concern with it but that of transferring it to yours."

"I beg your pardon, but it seems to me that you have one other duty in the matter—that of explaining *to me what all* this means. My mother had no expecta*tions that I knew of,* and after my father's death she

lived, as she died, in a condition not far removed from poverty. Where does this money come from? Is it a case of restitution?"

"So much I can answer," said the priest, "but nothing further. It was sent to me by one of ours in England, as a debt of justice from one of his penitents. Such things are not absolutely uncommon, as you probably may know. When they do occur it is quite safe, I think, to accept them without further question. Men are not apt to despoil themselves in that manner except under the prompting of an imperative sense of duty. You look dissatisfied."

"I am too old to enter fairyland," the other answered, his face clearing up, however, as he spoke, "but the fact is that I seem to have been under the spell for a week or so. Fairy gold, if I recollect right, has a way of disappearing when the sun shines on it."

"I don't warrant this from disappearing if you give it time enough, but for the present I think you will find it available for ordinary uses. If you are pressed for time I can go to the bank with you at once. If not, perhaps you will like to visit the church and go over our house and grounds with me. The young men are away at present, but classes reopen next week."

"You dismiss an important matter very lightly," said Giddings, relapsing into perplexed gravity. "I can not accept in this manner a gift as unexpected and as unreasonable as if it had dropped out of the skies. I must, for the sake of my own self-respect, insist upon some further explanation."

The priest shrugged his shoulders and spread out his two hands in front of him with a significant gesture, as if casting off all further responsibility.

"I can show you, if you like, the letter which conveyed my instructions, but if you can learn from it more than I have told you your perspicacity is greater than my own. I was to search out the son of Marie Gascoigne,

born in Montreal of Louis Gascoigne and Marie Lescœur, and married thirty years ago to John Giddings. You haven't told me, by the way, if that was your father's name?"

Giddings nodded, and the priest went on:

"In case this son could not be found, were dead, without heirs, or refused for any reason to accept it, the money was to be applied to charitable bequests, the chief of which regards our house here in Montreal. You see," he ended, laughing, "I have no further interest in persuading you. If your scruples are insurmountable I can assure you that we shall prove less delicate. Take to-night to think it over, if you like," he added, seeing that the other's hesitation was not yet dispelled: "*la nuit porte conseil, vous savez.* Meanwhile come into the church with me. The high altar is not finished yet, for funds come in but slowly. Your money, if you leave it in my hands, will be likely to go a long way toward its completion. Your devotion will not, perhaps, carry you so far?"

They were passing through the long corridor leading to the recreation-grounds as he spoke, leaving them afterward for the church, which they entered by the door of the sacristy.

"My devotion is a minus quantity, I fear," Giddings answered, as lightly as the other had spoken, "and on other grounds I don't know that I should care to assist in church-building. Your order has a rather shaky reputation as to taste in architecture, I have been told. I don't pretend to be a judge myself."

He took off his hat as they entered, and while the priest left him, to kneel for a moment before the altar, he stood near the chancel, looking about him with an air of not specially engrossing interest. The church was large and light, with immense pillars, rather bare-looking in the afternoon glow, which fell on empty pews and illuminated just at his right hand a picture representing a youth receiving the Holy Communion from the hands of an angel. Here and there in the

side aisles small knots of women were seated near the confessionals, and two or three were kneeling near the altar. One old man, poverty-stricken and in tatters, was making the Stations of the Cross—a fact which Giddings observed, but for which he knew no name. A certain look on the man's face as he prayed before the nearest Station bore its own interpretation with it. He remarked on it when, after making the round of the building, they again emerged into the grounds. They had passed the man once or twice while engaged in their examination, and each time he had looked at him with an interest more personal than was awakened by any thing else which met his eyes.

"The old man looks as if he had found it," he said, with an abruptness which to any one who knew him well would have marked his instinctive sense that he would be understood without need of further explanation. Father Baptist, who had been observing him with the comprehension born of natural sympathy, responded at once, going as directly to the point as Giddings himself had done.

"Peace, you mean?"

"Perhaps—repose, satisfaction, at all events. You will pardon me if I suggest that money might be as profitably spent in exchanging his rags for something more presentable as in adding further to the decorations of your altar.

"Very well," answered the priest, smiling; "give him the money, if you can not decide to keep it for yourself. I warn you, though, that it will probably amount to the same thing in the end. He is our pensioner in the present, it is true, but he has been our most generous benefactor in the past, and both conditions were the result of the free election of his own will. You look perplexed, from which I conclude that in spite of your baptism you are not of our faith."

"I am of my century," returned the other. "Faith of any sort is an exotic nowadays, and certainly I was not reared in yours."

"But your mother was a Catholic?"

"Like myself—by baptism. By early training also in her case. But the plant, as I tell you, is exotic. You may cultivate it in hot-houses with some success, as I am very willing to admit on such evidence as I have seen here to-day. Hers got into the open air and died there."

"Poor woman!" the priest said, with a sigh which was echoed by his listener. "She was not the happier on that account, I fancy."

"As I recollect her in my childhood and up to the period of my father's death, I should call her the happiest person I have ever known. She had the true womanly faculty of merging herself completely in what she loved. My father and I apparently filled her existence to its limits. She was as gay as a bird and as light hearted."

"And afterward?"

"What would you have? If you cut a man he bleeds. You can't avoid the knife in any case. Some of us can pretend we have not felt it—some of us, no doubt, have such tough hides that no stroke goes very deep. Truth is the best plaster in any case."

"Drop metaphor," said the priest, "and tell me, did she never regret her lost belief?"

"I don't say that she did not. I tell you only that her eyes had been opened to see both good and evil, and she was not able to resume her bandage. Frankly speaking, I regretted it for her sake."

"Ah, yes!" said Father Baptist, with another sigh. "When our eyes are opened in that manner the angel and the flaming sword are close at hand to drive us out of Paradise."

They had reached the front entrance as he spoke, and as they parted he said, with a return to his lighter manner, "To-morrow at eleven I shall be ready for your visit. Your hesitation becomes you," he added, smiling, "but I will have your check all ready for *you.*"

CHAPTER XXI.

MRS. DANFORTH had the true motherly eye, absolutely certain to note the least perceptible change in what it loves, though far from infallible in its efforts to trace such changes to their actual cause. Those which she began to observe in her daughter after her return perplexed her not a little. At first the girl seemed less thoughtful and more tender, or so the mother felt with that susceptibility which not unseldom marks those whose own apparent defects in this direction are to be accounted for by the difficulty they find in expressing emotion, and not by their want of feeling. She was gay and bright, and even caressing, as she had often been with her father in earlier days. Night and morning she proffered the kiss which between these two had usually been reserved for the occasion of a more prolonged and formal parting, doing so at first with a half-shamefaced bashful hesitation very like that with which the mother received it. Both felt the sweetness of a ceremony never afterward omitted; perhaps each had secretly longed for it more than once during the year in which grief and loneliness had broken the crust which veiled their hearts, and yet left them with so many old habitudes unchanged. She surrounded her mother with little attentions, and amused her much with graphic accounts of what seemed to the latter a week of novelties almost as absurd as those which befell Lemuel Gulliver in Lilliput.

"Of course," Mrs. Danforth said, "I have read about such performances in Cooper's novels. I had a great-uncle, for that matter, who was carried off by

the Indians and lived with them two years before he escaped. They scalped him even ; but he got over it and came back to Goshen and died there in his bed like a Christian. But why any one should want to go through such tomfooleries nowadays is past my finding out."

"There are no Indians now in the Adirondacks," Katherine answered, "nor any thing worse than bears and an occasional panther, which is more afraid of the camp-fire than any one behind it need be of him. And it is so lovely in the wilderness ! You can't imagine the beauty of the woods and waters, the sounds that seem to be a part of the stillness rather than to break it, and the fresh, sweet scent of all that grows about one. Waking in the mornings was like waking into Paradise."

"Anne says the musquitoes were unbearable, and the whole trip the most tiresome thing she ever undertook. I am sure I should have found it so myself. She says you met Richard Norton and a friend of his just as you were coming out of the woods. What in the world was he doing there ?"

"Hunting and fishing, I suppose," answered Katharine, turning as she did so to fetch her sewing from a table at the other side of the room. Following her with her eyes, her mother caught in the mirror the quick flush that dyed the girl's cheek and the half-smile that lingered for a moment in her eyes and about the deep-set corners of her mouth ; her thoughts were diverted by them into another channel, where they flowed in silence.

A few days later Richard himself called at the house, shortly after his arrival in the city, and Mrs. Danforth watched the two young people closely during the hour or two which defined his only visit. But she saw nothing to justify the not altogether unpleasant surmise which had occurred to her mind. Yet there had been something in the girl's eyes at the moment *when he entered*—a look of expectancy which went

beyond him and was baffled, and then swiftly sheathed itself again within the familiar one of friendly welcome, which was not lost upon the young man himself, although it happened to escape the mother. He was thin-skinned, mentally and physically, to a degree which went beyond mere observation, and which was one day to make him an immense success in the profession he had chosen. What it did for him just now was to gall slightly a certain masculine vanity which belonged to his youth rather than to his character, and which betrayed itself, though to his own consciousness solely, by the absolute silence it imposed on the subject of the friend from whom he had just parted. He had used all his powers of persuasion to induce Louis Giddings to return home with him, and been irritated by his unexpected and unexplained refusal. After the lapse of a year, which had changed Katharine much, and during which he had not seen her, what he thought her exceeding prettiness had struck him with a pleased surprise, and after her departure he had spoken of it to his friend, using the rather inappropriate terms of that description.

"I should never think of calling her a pretty girl," the latter replied in a tone which left on Richard's mind an impression that he had been found uncritical in his choice of an epithet, not to say maladroit in his selection of a subject for remark.

"He finds her something more than pretty," he reflected. "I don't know but that he is right. With those serious eyes, that look as if they had no bottom, and that mouth, which seems ready to say the unspeakable or to express it in a better fashion still, I suspect that Kitty really does pass beyond the limits of the commonplace and ordinary. I had a notion they would please each other."

Like another of Louis Giddings' friends, Richard had experienced a certain undefined desire to supply what he felt to be wanting to his happiness. Nothing

would have pleased him better than to assist at the growth of a serious attachment between these two. But something in his friend's manner when once again he used her name, this time as a possible inducement to alter the provoking resolution the latter had announced on the breaking-up of their camp, baffled his first suspicion. Now, when he met Katharine on his return, the complement of it suddenly affirmed itself to his apprehension and displeased him.

"I saw there was ore in that rock," he said to himself, "but I would never have believed the vein could be struck so readily. She is as cool and friendly with me as if we had been rocked in the same cradle."

He did not mention his friend's name throughout his visit—an omission which Katharine noticed and wondered at and longed to remedy, without being able to decide to do so. She was not sorry afterward for her reluctance, when the lapse of a few days made it plain that Richard must have gone back to Boston.

Mrs. Danforth, watching her more closely than before, as she saw her new-gained brightness fading, her old tendency to solitude and silence reaffirming itself, and the look of wistful longing, which had seldom been absent from her eyes, now deepening in them day by day, puzzled her brain about her more than ever. She began one afternoon, apparently apropos of nothing, to talk about the Nortons, commiserating the father and sharply criticising the mother, whose traits she professed to find vividly reproduced in Richard.

"I hear that he is likely to do well in his profession," she went on. "Perhaps he will. Boys always take after their mothers, they say, and she is go-ahead enough for any thing. But if it is true, I know I should pity from my heart any woman foolish enough to marry a son of hers."

But Katharine, though she defended him, did it in a manner so unembarrassed and so kindly that her mother was reassured at once.

"*I always liked* Richard more than any other of the

children whom I knew," the girl said, not even raising her eyes from the sewing with which her hands were generally busy when she sat beside her mother. "I think I must go some day and see the old folks—I half-promised him I would. I don't think he is much like his mother. He has her mouth and chin, perhaps, but his eyes, when he is pleased, are very like his father's. How good Mr. Norton is!" she ended, with a sigh which set the mother on still another track. Something new ailed her daughter, evidently. Was it, could it be, that she was "under conviction," and that the prayers which had followed her from her birth were at last to receive their answer?

Katharine herself would have been fully as perplexed as her mother to define the cause of her new trouble. That she was in love, and with a stranger with whom she had hardly exchanged a word, was a fancy even more absurd than it was humiliating. She was too truthful, in fact, to have much pride, though that reflection certainly did not occur to her. Why, she had barely glanced at him even. Yet, as she said this to herself, his face came back so vividly, and with such a look of comprehension and sympathy in its eyes, that she blushed again, as she had done whenever she had thought about him since. No, it was life itself, so aimless and so empty, which was pressing on her.

"I begin to look like Aunt Rebecca," she thought one day, when, turning her eyes from the sky, where they had lost themselves in dreams, they fell on her own image in the glass. "Is there really nothing worth having, or is it only that I have not found the best there is?"

She began to grow restless as time went on, especially when her mother proved equally unwilling to have her take up the post-graduate course held necessary if she were to equip herself for teaching in a superior school, or to permit her to accept a position offered her through the intermediation of one of her late professors, in a village some miles distant. The latter

scheme Katharine had regarded with much favor, though feeling all the while that her mother was quite right in rejecting it absolutely on the ground of her unwillingness to undergo a prolonged separation. Yet what a relief it would have been to change the scene entirely—to get away from the little house to which they had removed in the spring, where every thing was stamped with reminiscences of her earliest childhood, and yet where every thing looked strange. Her mother had parted with many familiar objects when they left their former quarters, saying that the present ones would seem more homelike if she did not remove her aunt's belongings, which still remained as she had left them. But to Katharine the rooms seemed narrow, plain, and inconvenient; the little back-yard, in which the ugly yellow wall of a wood-shed bounded her horizon at a distance of twenty feet, spoke eloquently, by way of contrast, of the long stretch of grass and flowers where she had taken one of her chiefest pleasures: even the tall eight-day clock standing in the corner of the parlor, to whose slow, melancholy tick and resonant chime she listened at night when she lay sleepless—all wearied her with a sense of dull, homely monotony in which there seemed no hope of change. The custom of family prayers had been kept up by Mrs. Danforth, Katharine always reading now the chapter with which they were begun, as she had done occasionally even in her father's lifetime. One night, after they were ended, the mother said:

"When you were little, Kitty, and father gave the Book to you, I generally had to beg you not to read about Vashti the queen. She got to be tiresome when one heard about her two or three times a week. I shall have to ask you now to let me hear once in a while something more hopeful than 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!'"

"Shall I try the Song of Solomon next time?" *asked the girl,* with a little laugh.

"Why shouldn't we drop the Old Testament altogether?"

"Very well." And the next night she began with the Apocalypse.

"I have no comfort with such reading," Mrs. Danforth complained again. "You go from Solomon, whom I don't like, to John, whom I don't understand."

"Well," said Katharine, "you must select your own author to-morrow. I am ready for any thing, even the genealogies in Luke and Matthew."

The mother sighed.

"I wish," she said, "that I could see you show some interest in it—or in any thing. What ails you, child?"

"Oh! nothing, mammy," the girl answered, smiling though as she spoke and offering her good-night kiss. "It is only that I am fast coming to believe that Solomon was, after all, the wisest of mankind."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN mid-October the Whites came home.

"The trip we first projected was too absurdly short," Anna said on the occasion of her earliest visit to her cousin after her return. "Three months would not have been too much to spend in England alone, we had so many letters to the pleasantest sort of famous people. Think of seeing Ruskin face to face and telling him how delightful you found his *Modern Painters*, and then going afterward to look at the Turners for yourself! Queer-looking things some of them were, too! And then fancy my finding Arthur's own book in Dr. Martineau's library! It made me feel as if we were almost famous ourselves."

A slip of memory doubtless prevented Mrs. White from adding that it was a presentation copy. An air of matronliness pervaded and changed the young woman, giving a certain propriety to the self-sufficiency which in the girl had bordered on conceit. She seemed to Katharine a person of immense experience, who merited a degree of respect beyond any hitherto accorded her. Even Mrs. Danforth, in the pleasure of seeing her daughter kindle once more into animation, seemed willing to accept, on the score of kinship, an intimacy which on others she would have been glad to avoid.

"We saw Thomas Carlyle, too," Mrs. White ran on, with the volubility of a person well convinced that what she has to say will be far more interesting to all parties than any thing she is likely to hear. "We had two *letters to him*, and we took tea once at his house in *Chelsea*. He talked all the time, and abused

Americans roundly—the Abolitionists especially—which was not very grateful on his part, seeing that it is we who buy and read his books. Arthur liked his wife better than he did him—but, of course, that is nonsense. She said some bright things, too, but I thought she looked ill-natured. The most charming woman I saw was a Miss Fox. We went to Cornwall, partly for the scenery, of course, but Aaron Carew got me a letter to her from Friend Mott. She was more orthodox than we really liked, but *so* serene and placid. It made me think of old times to be thee'd and thou'd as we were there. She talked to me a good deal about her brother, who died last year, and showed me some of his poetry. I thought it was beautiful, but Arthur said it smacked too much of the broad-brimmed hat and the drab coat-tails. She seemed to have known almost every one worth knowing. And what a delightful house! Do you know, I mean to have evenings every week this winter. They used to have sociables round at different houses once a fortnight last year, but I think the minister's parlor ought to be the center. I won't pretend to entertain them, of course; we can't afford it. I may give them a cup of tea, perhaps, but nothing more. I shall expect Kitty always, without further notice. Would there be any use in asking you, Cousin Eliza?"

"Not the slightest. You must be fonder of company than ever I was if you think of throwing open your doors as often as that to every Tom, Dick, and Harry who cares to come."

"One owes something to one's position," Anna answered, with the tone of one condescending to a truism which ought not to need repetition.

"You were not all the time in England, surely?" asked Katharine.

"No; but most of it. We ran over to Paris for a week, and of course we went to Rome. But it was pleasanter where we found people whom it was easy to talk to and who cared about the same sort of things.

We were both tongue-tied in France, for all that Arthur reads French with ease and I practiced talking so much last year with Miss Smith. But when the French speak it, it doesn't sound the least in the world as one expected it would. They were like a set of monkeys chattering. We could generally make them understand what we wanted, but when it came their turn to answer we were all in the dark. In Rome we found some Bostonians and got along very well. Arthur wished very much to go to Hungary—or perhaps it was Transylvania: I don't just remember. There are Unitarians there who have a bishop, and he wanted to put a chapter about them in his book. But we could not afford either the time or the money. It costs frightfully to travel!"

"Is he going to write another book?"

"Oh certainly! The least we could expect of the trip would be that it should pay for itself in that way. We have both been taking notes all the time. That is the way to make books. I only wish he would let me put in all mine; but he thinks they are generally too personal. After all, for real intellectual life America is the place. We got back to New York the very last day of September, and, after going home to father's for a day or two, we went right on to Boston to attend the Unitarian conference. We both thought we heard more eloquence and more original thinking there than anywhere else. The most radical English people one sees are hidebound with prejudices when you compare them to the best among ourselves. I must be going. Put on your hat, Kitty, and come home to tea with me. I have a thousand things to show and tell you."

"Were you long in Boston?" asked Katharine when they had gained the street.

"Nearly ten days. The conference lasted a week, and then, on the very last day of it, Arthur met his old friend Mr. Giddings, and we staid rather longer than we would otherwise, because they wanted to visit together a little. We had been stopping at a hotel,

but we found we could have a room just as well as not in the house where he is living, so we went there for the last few days. I really think Arthur enjoyed that more than any thing else that has occurred since we left home. They were like brothers together in college. He promised to visit us before long, which surprised me, for I had supposed him to be very shy and unwilling to go any where. You don't know him, of course, but I have heard so much of him from Arthur that perhaps I have mentioned his name some time or other."

"It sounds familiar," said Katharine, pushed into disingenuousness by the instinct of self-defense which led her to hide the significance of the rush of pleasure which made her face all smiles. "How you say Arthur this and Arthur that, as if the world had suddenly gone to turning round that little man! You were not jealous of his friend, I suppose?"

Anna shrugged her shoulders.

"It isn't in me to be jealous, I think. One must have a very low opinion of one's own merits to be that. In fact I liked Mr. Giddings too much myself for any thing of the sort. He is greatly changed in some respects, my husband says. The lady in whose house he is living has lately become a widow; she told me that he had been helping her to nurse her husband for the last month. She has two children, that he makes as much of as if they were his own; and she speaks of him as if he were an angel of kindness and consideration. I told Arthur I should not be a bit surprised if he were to marry her some day."

"And did Mr. White agree with you?"

"Oh!" said Anna, laughing, "he said my mind ran altogether too much on marrying and giving in marriage. He was greatly taken with Mrs. Kitchener himself. She is a pretty little woman, who must be half a dozen years older than Mr. Giddings—but those fair women never show their age. I think he will marry her yet, if only out of pity and because of the

children. Talking of children, Mrs. Price seems to have fairly set Fanny against me. She screamed like a little witch when I tried to take her the day we got home."

"Now, that is not fair, Anna. She never liked you, so far as I remember, and she is cross-grained to every body, almost. I haven't seen much of Mrs. Price this summer."

"And you'll see less this winter. She says she is going to stay with her mother-in-law in New Haven. They have patched up a peace, I suppose. She was there after her husband's death until Arthur invited her to come here, but I imagine they kept up an armed neutrality whenever they were not actually at swords' points. Arthur says he would try harder than he has done to keep her with us, if he did not know the old lady to be in failing health and that his sister's interests would be better served by going. For my part, I always think a poor excuse is better than none; sometimes it is even better than a good one. I shall be heartily pleased to see her back turned and to feel myself mistress in my own house."

"Wouldn't you be that in any case?"

"Certainly I should; but I like freedom from criticism as well as freedom in action. Even silent criticism can become offensive, as Mrs. Price has made me feel more than once already. She appeared to take Arthur's wish to remarry as a personal affront, and I don't see why. She is not really dependent on him."

"You can't be so sure as that of people's motives, I think," said Katharine, who had been taken into the widow's confidence on this and other subjects. "If it had been any one else, now," Mrs. Price had said to her just after the marriage, "I shouldn't have minded so much. If it had been you, for instance, I should have been positively glad of it. But that mass of self-assertion and self-conceit, plastered over with a layer of rules and maxims that she actually mistakes for her own skin! How men can be so blind! Arthur, too,

to rush from a little white rabbit like his first wife to that red-cheeked Amazon posing for the Puritan Maiden! I can't bear her, and never could. For my brother's sake I will stay here and look after the child till they come back, but after that I wash my hands of them. The widest house that ever was built wouldn't be roomy enough for her and me."

"Oh, yes, you can," Anna responded to her cousin's last remark. "Some people are stupid, I don't doubt, but I have never found my penetration at fault thus far."

"How did you find them all at home?" asked Katharine, changing the subject.

Anna's face clouded at once.

"Things go so contrary in this world!" she said. "I don't see how Mary can ever forgive herself for being so self-willed and opinionated. I know I did my best to make her hear reason. I believe people always 'get come up with,' as my mother used to say, when they think they are so essential to the framework of things that they must always be interfering to help Providence out of a muddle. She might have married when I did and been happy; for, as it turns out, all would have gone just as straight at home without her as with her."

"I don't understand."

"Of course you don't. We had not been gone a month before my half-sister's husband died, and she has gone back to my father's. There was the whole difficulty settled at once."

"But too late for Mary."

"Well, whose fault is it? There she goes about, looking like a ghost, and with eyes as big as moons. I couldn't help telling her that I hoped she would hear reason another time and not be so bent on taking her own way in spite of counsel."

"What did she say?"

"*She* didn't say any thing. Sarah, though—that is my half-sister, Mrs. Gay—took it on her to say to

Arthur that she thought a little delay on our part would have answered every purpose. I don't deny it, but who could foresee what was going to turn up?"

"Poor Mary!" sighed Katharine. "I'm afraid Mr. White couldn't have enjoyed his visit much. Had he ever seen her before?"

"No," said Anna, frowning again at the recollection of some post-nuptial self-criticism on his part which she had divined rather than listened to. "It seems to me, Kitty, that you have a genius for annoying subjects. I have nothing to reproach myself with, in any case, and I count my experiences of the last three months as so much clear gain. There he is now at the window with Fanny in his arms. She is too old to be coddled in that fashion. I told Dinah to have tea ready at five, and we will both walk home with you afterward. I have some lovely photographs to show you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"COULDN'T you come and spend this afternoon and evening with us!" ran a note which Katharine received from her cousin a few weeks later. "I won't pretend that pure hospitality prompts the invitation, though you know how glad we both are to see you always. But I had set my heart on going out with Arthur to-day *en grande tenue*, to make a series of return-calls. And Fanny has been croupy all night, Dinah says, and this morning she looks more peaked and like a washed-out rag than ever. Arthur says he can't think of leaving her alone with the girl under the circumstances. I don't suppose it would make the least difference myself, but he never will listen to reason where that child is concerned. Do take pity on me and come down about half-past two. She is always on her best behavior with you, and you are never at a loss to amuse yourself in the library. We shall be home to tea between six and seven, and it is always probable that some one will drop in during the evening. I engaged a carriage yesterday, and I do hate to put things off when once I have settled on them. Send back word by Dinah whether I may expect you."

"I suppose there is nothing to prevent?" asked Katharine as she finished reading this appeal aloud. "This is your afternoon for class; why shouldn't you go in and take tea with the minister's wife afterward? I heard her asking you the other day. Hannah could go after you about eight o'clock, and I shall be home by nine at furthest."

"A fine stepmother she is going to make!" said Mrs. Danforth, passing over this suggestion. "I

never could understand people's taking up burdens they don't mean to carry. It would serve her quite right to tell her no."

"'If every one got his deserts, which of us would 'scape a whipping?'" laughed Katharine. "I don't want to tell her no, as it happens. I would much rather oblige her than not. But I don't like leaving you alone quite so often. I was there only last Friday. If you would come too—which, of course, you won't—or if you would agree to go in and pay Mrs. Farr a visit, I should absent myself with an easier mind."

"Perhaps I will; I half-promised her when she was here. But I hate beginning to go about alone. I hardly ever did it even when I was a girl, and never since."

"It will do you good, mammy," said the girl caressingly. "If things had been different I should have coaxed you out of this way of living long ago, and carried you about the world with me to look at things and people. We are both of us too much by ourselves for our own good."

"'And when alone, then am I least alone,'" quoted the mother, who was growing daily more like her former self. "But you must get out my other cap and let me take a look at it, if I am to put it on this evening."

Mr. White's house in Hudson Street was large and old-fashioned. Its low stone stoop, facing sideways, led up to a door ornamented by a ponderous knocker and surmounted by a fan-light shaped like a half-moon and covered on the inside with green gauze. The wide hall was hung with paper intended to produce the illusion of oak paneling—an illusion with which Miss Fanny had recently made havoc in sundry moments of ill-humor. A hat-rack, carved at the upper extremity into a not very successful imitation of a stag's head and antlers, stood opposite the front-parlor door, and was flanked by a tall, straight-backed

armchair upholstered in purple leather, and a small table bearing a card-receiver. A white-marbled oil-cloth, the bi-weekly torment of black Dinah's existence under the new *regime*, relieved to the eye by two or three red, fluffy mats bordered with green, which lay at the side-portals and the foot of the stairs, struck, nevertheless, a chilly sensation to the heart as well as the feet of whoever opened the front door upon it of a cold day.

Within the parlors things wore a somewhat cheerier aspect. A certain Quakerish simplicity marked all their appointments, but the wide windows, if undraped by curtains and hung with white and gold shades, were festooned with climbing ivy and decked with flourishing ferns which had been the object of Mrs. Price's fostering care. The wood-colored carpet, spotted with an irregular tracery of leaves in darker brown, was covered, as to its center, by a red drugget, which, though originally intended more for use than ornament, served both objects equally well. Since her installation Anna had hung up some of her photographic acquisitions in *passe-partout* mountings. Our Lady of Dolors and the Man of Sorrows, in the two best-known versions, were between the windows in the place usually occupied by the tall mirror which formerly claimed the post of honor in most American parlors. In this one it stretched across the mantlepiece and reflected a pair of old silver candlesticks which Arthur's sister had vainly begged to carry away with her. Leonardo's Last Supper was suspended over a what-not on the side of the chimney furthest from the light, and a copy of his Jocunda with its inscrutable eyes and faint, elusive smile, stood out well from the neutral-tinted wall-paper on the other. One or two family portraits, stiff, wooden, staring, were above a long mahogany sofa luxuriously cushioned as to comfort, but disagreeable enough to the eye in its drab rep corded with dark red. The chairs stood about in a sort of formal irregularity which suggested

a certain studied avoidance of symmetry which had just failed of attaining ease, and a round table in the middle, covered with a dark brown cloth embroidered in gold, bore a number of well-bound volumes which had apparently overflowed from the tall bookcases that lined one entire wall of the back parlor, which Mr. White had appropriated to his own use. This was the appearance of the front one when it had been newly put to rights by the careful fingers of its mistress and left in solitude to await the advent of occasional callers.

But on this cold November afternoon, when the gray air seemed to hold the promise of the first snowfall of the season, the room looked brighter than its wont by reason of the glowing anthracite fire kindled in the grate and coaxed sometimes to a flame by a great lump of the cannel coal which stood beside it in a polished brass scuttle. The doors between it and the library were thrown open, and there also there was a fire in a cylinder stove; for Mr. White, in accepting Katharine's services as volunteer nurse and companion for the little one, had stipulated that her pleasure and the comfort of both should be thus provided for. The young girl herself lighted up the room into a certain vividness of life and warmed it with a suggestion of domesticity, even though her slender figure, still clad in the flowing habiliments of mourning, relieved only by a touch of white at throat and wrists, had an air of almost nunlike gravity. The little creature on the rug before the fire, in scarlet flannel and white, long-sleeved apron, with another bit of flannel about her neck, and stockings to match on the tiny legs pushed out toward the blaze, had been very persistent in her claims upon attention. Her headless doll presented no attractions, she was too weak to run about, and the window was interdicted on account of possible draughts. Katharine had chanted Mother Goose until her memory and her *throat were* both weary, while her imaginative flights

into fairy-land were checked partly by the child's incredulity and partly by her insistence on repetitions rather than variations of such tales as happened to strike her fancy. Finally she complained of being cold, upon which Katharine gathered her up on her lap, where she dropped asleep at last with her flaxen head upon the young girl's shoulder.

Katharine had not sufficiently foreseen this probable contingency to provide herself with a book in anticipation of it. Moreover, at four o'clock the early twilight was already falling. The light from the fire glowed ruddy and cheerful, and the low, wide armchair with its downy cushions was very comfortable. Gradually the day-dreams into which she lapsed grew vaguer, and she, too, dropped into a light slumber, in which the sound of the brass knocker on its shield half an hour later translated itself into the thud of the guide's ax in the wilderness. Dinah's parley with the new-comer escaped her wholly, though prolonged beyond ordinary bounds, and it was only when the door opened and the woman ushered in a stranger, proceeding afterward to the back room to light the gas in the drop-light over the study table, that she fully wakened. Even then she could not move without disturbing Fanny, and her ample chair, placed just in front of the grate, hid her completely from those who were behind her.

" Dey'll be in 'fore long, sir," said Dinah. " Missus' cousin was in here with the little 'un, but I guess likely she's taken her up stairs to her crib. If you'd sit down by the fire, sir, I'd go up and let her know. I yeered her singin' here not ten minutes ago."

" Don't disturb yourself, Dinah," said Katharine, turning her head toward the back parlor, where the girl was still busy with the match-box. " I'm here, but I can't well rise, for Fanny has just dropped asleep." She pushed her chair back on its rollers as she spoke, in order to make room. " You might carry her up stairs, perhaps. No! she is waking again. I will

keep her." Then, observing that the new-comer neither seated himself nor approached the fire, she addressed him in a voice in which he felt the suggestion of a smile: "Pray excuse my involuntary bad manners, and take the arm-chair opposite. It is so dark that my cousins can hardly stay out much longer."

The gas blazed into full head as she spoke, sinking again in another instant to decorous dimness as Dinah lowered it to what she deemed an economic height before leaving the room. Katharine's eyes, lifting themselves to the tall figure which approached her, recognized him with a start which seemed to make her heart 'stand still. She arose now, and Fanny slid down to her feet with a half-cross, half-sickly cry. As her elders released their clasp of each other's hand Louis Giddings stooped and picked her up.

"Come, little one," he said; "for every nursery rhyme this young lady knows I'll wager I can give you half a dozen."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE supreme moments in life never answer to our anticipations of them. Sometimes, indeed, they go beyond them, at others they fall short, but they are never such as we supposed they would be. No day had passed since the first meeting of these two that each had not greatly occupied the other's thoughts. The young girl sitting opposite to him now, her slender figure drawn into a curve of the great arm-chair, the firelight shining on her face and reflecting itself in her dark, serious eyes, was the goal at which Louis Giddings had proposed to terminate his present journey. To him a renewal of their acquaintance was a foregone conclusion from the first, although he deferred it for a reason he thought important. The object of such a renewal was equally plain to him. He meant to win, if he could, the girl who had suddenly rekindled in him not alone the ardor and the passion of his youth, but its hopes and its ambitions, and to take up again the common life of his kind, from which for years he had felt himself shut out. No obstacle should stand in his way now except his inability to make himself beloved. His vanity was not great, and it had suffered in the past along with his love and his pride. But although there had been many a moment when, in recalling Katharine's image, the thought of ill-success had weighed upon him, yet his hopes were still stronger than his fears. "Some tie there is between us," he assured himself whenever the latter persisted in recurring. "I felt it vibrate, and I believe she felt it too. At all events, I can but try to draw it tighter."

With Katharine the case was different. In spite of her good sense, her heart had told her that in the few words that passed between them on the night of their first meeting the promise of another had been contained and she had confidently expected to see him with Richard Norton on their return from the woods. Baffled in this first anticipation, her hope faded, and when momentarily revived by her cousin's account of her meeting with him and his promised visit, it had been extinguished anew by her idle gossip. Neither hope nor vanity was strong in her, and, while she had thought much of the change so unexpectedly wrought in her own experience, she had thought little of any effect she might have produced herself. Some day, perhaps, he would arrive, and she might in that case meet him ; but even that seemed more than doubtful. Mr. White, when his wife had once alluded to his friend's coming in her presence, had assured her that she might as profitably expect a white black-bird as a visit from Louis Giddings.

"But he promised," reiterated Anna, "and he was quite in earnest about it, too, or I am very much mistaken."

"I wouldn't for the world impugn your discernment, my dear," was the smiling answer. "Louis and I are very old friends, and there is no one whom I would so gladly welcome under my roof. But I was never able to persuade him, even when my sister and I were alone here. At present I fear my chances of that pleasure are immeasurably smaller than ever."

Anna shrugged her shoulders.

"Don't be so confident," she said. "We were very good friends, I assure you, and for my part I expect to see him here before any of us are much older. For a shy man, as you seem to think him, he appeared to me to have *bien assez d'aplomb et de savoir-vivre.*"

Mr. White's eyes met Katharine's at that moment with a shade of amusement in them.

"*You would* never believe," he said, addressing

her, "how much more trippingly French rolls off one's tongue here than in France. I have thought of that often lately, as one more instance of the innate perversity of things. I hope your prevision is correct, my dear," he added, turning to his wife, "but, all the same, I think it will be time enough to get his room ready when you find his hat hanging in the hall."

An unheralded meeting like the present had been among the possibilities which had not occurred to the minds of either. And here again, Louis Giddings had the advantage, his parley with the servant having apprised him of Katharine's presence before he entered it. To find her there, and alone, solved one of his difficulties at once. He had felt that a formal, uninvited call upon her at her mother's house would be such a presumption on so slight an acquaintance as by itself to demand an explanation. But that was what he had determined on, with a characteristic unwillingness to leave any thing to chance, or to profit, at this stage of his quest, by the intervention of any third whatever. He would know, in that case, or so he fancied, what to say and when to say it. Either he should see at once, in the deep, soft eyes that had drawn him thus far, the light of welcome which would make all things easy, or gain at least the right to make himself better known and so give his hopes a surer foundation than he was able to persuade himself they possessed when the time drew near to put them to the trial. Yet the unlooked for chance that had come to his aid embarrassed him curiously. The image that had been forming in his mind and grown familiar there paled and put on a sudden cold unlikeness to this creature of flesh and blood, whose hand had trembled for an instant in his own, and on whose face the play of quick emotions had been plainly legible before she was able to turn it back into the shadow. The sense of what it would cost him to lose her touched him so keenly, even at the instant when he was possessed by the certainty that no such loss

awaited him, that he felt the presence of the child as a sensible relief and outlet to the mad impulse which dared seek no other.

"Put me down!" cried Fanny, struggling in his arms and turning her little face from side to side. "I want to go back to Aunt Kitty. You hurt me. I don't like you!"

To Katharine, too, this moment had been a sudden and complete illumination, though of her own heart only. For the moment that was sufficient. The joy of loving rushed over her like a sea that has burst its ancient barriers and inundates a desert whose sands have turned their parched faces to the sun through centuries. No thought of the future clouded an instant whose sweetness was but intensified by the bitter, aromatic perfume yielded by the past as it faded into nothingness. Intense emotion, felt for the first time, quieted and made her calm when its first surge was over, and she sat silently in her corner, turning her face further from the ruddy hearth, and burying it willingly on the flaxen head when it resumed its place upon her shoulder. Her self-possession returned before the fretful but welcome importunities of the little one yielded again to slumber, and with it came the instinct to guard the secret she was unconscious of having betrayed already.

"Give her to me; I shall not frighten her again," demanded Louis once more before this consummation had been reached. There was a smile in his eyes which was answered in those of the young girl as he bent toward her. The sense of absolute well-being which belongs to happy love had restored him also to himself, and something in the situation moved him to the silent laughter that lay close beside most of his deeper feelings.

"I was within an ace of seizing her as if she had been a young Sabine whose brother or lover I had just run through," he thought as he sank back again into the cushions of his chair when this offer had been refused.

"God be thanked! there is nothing between us which can not be put aside in a gentler fashion."

When he spoke again the other voices had passed for some moments into silence and his own had relapsed into gravity.

"For years," he said, "this hour between daylight and darkness has been the most hideous to me of the twenty-four. Yet the child's instinct is the true one—it is the time for stories. Will you let me tell you one? It was the hope of doing so that brought me here to-day; it would have brought me sooner if I had not believed the delay would give me the right to tell it completely and then put it out of my memory forever. The moment that it did so I turned my face your way, though even then I did not dare to think of telling it so soon. It will not displease you, I hope, if I say I have thought of little else, since the day we met last summer, but of another day when I should find myself face to face with you once more."

Katharine's heart beat heavily again, and she turned toward him with a motion as instinctive and as unresisted as that with which a flower turns to the sun. He saw it, and it drew him out of his regained composure. He left his seat and kneeled down to bring his head on a level with her own, taking as he did so the little hand that had been put out to him involuntarily.

"I will tell you that another time, my love," he said, his voice sinking into a whisper and then dying on her lips. "Just now I can think of nothing but that we love each other—I came to ask you to be my wife, dear. Thank God! you answer me before I ask."

"I could not help it," she said under her breath, but in a tone that vibrated with the intensity of her feeling, drawing back from him as she spoke, but not averting the face that had first grown pale and then flushed painfully.

"I have been hoping for these three months that you could not," he answered, looking at her with a smile that brought still deeper waves of color and

suffused her eyes with tears. "Don't break my heart with blushing that way, child! You never would have given me such a pang of pleasure if you could. After all, you know, I think I did ask, though not so plainly as I do it now," he went on after a pause, smiling still, but not touching the hand that had been withdrawn or the head that had drooped and turned away. "Look at me, love, and tell me what you think it means that each of us knew our own the instant that we saw it? My God!" he added, more to himself than her, "how easily it might have meant something different from this!"

At his altered tone the girl lifted her head. Her clear eyes looked straight into his, and her hand went toward him again.

"How good you are!" she said softly. "I was afraid I loved you but I was not sure. Now I am glad."

"If to love you is to be good, be sure I am the best man in the world. Ah!" he went on, looking at her still with eyes in which passion glowed but did not flame, "I see well what I am to you. God be praised! that speaks in every line of your sweet face. Don't —don't turn it away from me again! There are not many perfect moments in life, and this one will never come back to either of us. I love you, I long for you, but I don't want even to look at you except as you give yourself to me of your own free and perfect will. I never could be all to you that you are to me."

"I love you, too," the girl answered slowly, and her voice was heavy, as if each word bore on it the whole weight of her heart. "What is it to love but to give every thing?"

"Good God!" he said, looking at her still, "what have I done to deserve this hour? I see your soul, living, palpitating, and I know you hold back nothing. You touch me to the very roots of my being. And yet I swear to you that if I were not free to take you, —*if, seeing* as I do your sweet, innocent surrender, I

had that to say to you which until yesterday I still thought I might have, if I spoke at all—I could not say it. I should leave you as you are. But you are mine—my love, my wife!" And his arm, which had been resting on her chair, slid around her in a light embrace. "There is not even a question in your eyes; and yet I still have something to tell you."

"Not now," she breathed. "I can bear nothing further." She looked down at the child, still lying on her left arm. "And I must go home," she added, lifting her slow lids again. "I can not wait to see them when they come. If you would ring, so that she might be carried up stairs?"

"Laws, honey!" said Dinah, as Katharine, who had slowly followed her to the upper room, sank down on a chair beside the little bed. "She's too heavy for you, a great chile like dis. You're clean fagged out. It's one woman's work, for sure, to wait on her, poor dear! You don't ever mean to go home without your tea? Sho', now—an' I hear the carriage stoppin' at the door dis very minute."

"Go down quick and ask Mrs. White to send me back in it. Tell her my head aches and I must go at once. I'll be down myself the moment I can find my hat."

"If you really can not be persuaded," Anna said, meeting her cousin at the head of the front steps, and looking radiant and rosy from the keen air, "of course it is fortunate that we have not yet dismissed the man. Look at my cloak! I'm all white with snow only in coming from the carriage. I should think the streets were six inches deep with it. I've had a lovely time, and I'm ever so much obliged. Here, Arthur, put Kitty in and tell the man where to take her. A gentleman in the parlor, did you say, Dinah?" And she passed on into the room where Louis Giddings was standing with his back to the fire.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE morning was well advanced when Katharine awoke from the profound sleep into which she had fallen after a night too full of waking dreams for slumber. Her eyes, opening then upon her new-found joy, half-closed on it again, and a faint smile hovering about her soft lips gave them an almost infantine curve. Mrs. Danforth, coming in and sitting down on the side of the low bed, regarded her in silence for a moment before speaking in a voice that took, involuntarily, its gentlest tone. "She looks precisely as she used to in her cradle," had been the mother's thought.

"Is your headache better?" she asked. "I came in about eight o'clock, but you were so sound asleep I would not wake you. I used to have headaches myself when I was young, and I know there is nothing for them like a good sleep, when you can get it. But now it is close upon the stroke of ten."

"Oh mother!" the girl said, rising from her pillow with eyes that looked like stars reflected in a limpid pool—"Oh mother!" And she took her in her arms. "I shall never have an ache again while time lasts. I don't believe there is such a thing in all the world."

"What is it?" asked the mother, divided between surprise and hope. "What ails you, child? Have you—are you—" She stopped, not knowing in what shape to put the question which came foremost to her lips and heart. Katharine divined it, and she smiled anew.

"Oh! no, mother," she said, "it isn't that. It is—*oh! don't you know? Can't you guess? Were you never young yourself?*"

"I *don't* know," the mother answered, drawing back a little from her daughter. "And I can't guess. I have been young, but I never went into ecstasies solely on that account. You will have to explain yourself better if you want me to understand."

While she was speaking the knocker resounded through the quiet house. The great clock began its slow, musical strokes, and mingling with them Katharine heard a voice she recognized. In another moment the door of her chamber opened and Hannah stood upon the threshold.

"A strange gentleman, ma'am," she said, presenting a card. "He would like to see you as soon as you are at liberty, and I showed him into the parlor."

It was one of Mrs. Danforth's old-fashioned courtesies never to keep a caller waiting. The name on the card she held in her hand was unfamiliar, and she rose at once. But after she had done so she still lingered for an instant. Katharine had buried her face again upon her pillow.

"Don't lie there any longer, then," she said. "Ten o'clock is too late for people who have no aches or pains and don't believe in their existence. Are you sure you have nothing to tell me?"

"Oh!" said the girl, "I will tell you every thing when you come back—every thing that you will not know already."

The interview seemed to Katharine interminable, even while she would not for the world have had it shortened. It was not, in reality, very brief, although Louis had a genius for comprehensive statement and Mrs. Danforth was by no means dull. She had gone down-stairs without the shade of a suspicion as to what awaited her, and in the tall figure that on her entrance turned from his contemplation of the large photographs of herself and her husband which hung in oval gilt frames against the wall beside the further window, she saw merely another of the strangers who still occasionally presented themselves on business

connected with the unsettled estate. She had a shrewd, instinctive insight into character, which, while it seldom formulated its conclusions into any thing more definite than a simple statement of liking or dislike, was none the less sure and immovable on that account. What she thought of the face now bent upon her would have been sufficiently indicated to any one who knew her well by a certain relaxation of the lines about her mouth and eyes, which showed that she felt it unnecessary to keep up the guard she habitually erected on such occasions.

As for Louis, he had finished to his satisfaction his study of the two heads, which it seemed to him he would have found interesting under any circumstances.

"Both of them would be good to have in the ascending line of one's family," he said to himself; "and Katharine's is made of what is best in each. How on earth am I going to explain this sudden demand on the old lady's sympathies? They gush only in legitimate channels, and not without good reason even then, or the sun has lied about her."

His task, in fact, was not of the easiest.

"You want to marry Katharine!" the mother exclaimed when that fact had become undeniably evident. "My daughter! Why, she does not know you! I never heard her breathe your name! I know nothing at all about you!"

Louis laughed a little. Her astonishment was so genuine, and his own means for allaying it seemed so absurdly inadequate to the occasion.

"I think we know each other, Katharine and I," he said, "although it is certainly not to be wondered at that she has not spoken of me. I met her in the woods last summer with her aunt and uncle; but I have never had the opportunity to do so since until yesterday afternoon. Serious matters have detained me, until now, in Boston, where I live; otherwise, if I could have gained her permission, I should have

done myself the honor to ask yours before to-day."

"And do you mean to tell me that you have gained hers now? Did you speak to her last summer? I understand neither of you."

"No," he said, smiling in spite of his sense that gravity might become the occasion better. "I simply committed the indiscretion of falling in love with her on the spot."

"But you have told her now? And she has sent you to me? I would never have believed it of her. Where, pray, did you see her yesterday?"

"At the house of my old friend, Arthur White. That was a pure accident. I came to the city yesterday with the express purpose of seeking her here and putting my question. I admit that my having done so at once must seem to you extremely premature, under the circumstances."

"But you did put it? And she—" The recollection of the scene just enacted up-stairs flashed across the mother's mind and found its explanation. She sat silent.

"Young girls," she said, after a pause which her visitor showed no signs of breaking, though he was studying her attentively while it lasted—"young girls are not much like what they were in my time. Even my own daughter is not. And yet she has always seemed so hard to please!"

She looked up, as she ended, from the floor on which her eyes had been fastened. Louis crossed the room and sat down beside her on the sofa.

"Don't be too hard upon us," he said. "I'm afraid—that is to say, I think, that neither of us could help it. Don't you see," he added, as in spite of herself she smiled, "what an enormous indorsement of my merits that very difficulty you speak of lends me?"

"I see," she answered, "that you are bent on taking your own way; and as for her, she has never taken any other since she was born. But, nevertheless, I

must know something more about you. You can not expect me to give you all I have as readily as she seems to have been willing to. Have you explained your position to her ?"

"No," he said, laughing again. "I fear she took me on trust. But it will not be difficult, I think, to give you whatever assurances you require. You know my young friend Norton, from whom I first heard her name, and in whose company I met her. Either he or his uncle can give you such particulars as you are likely to desire in addition to those that I will offer you at once. I am a lawyer by profession and a journalist by practice ; but I have a private fortune sufficiently considerable to permit me to think of marrying without great indiscretion. There is White, too. We were at college together, and have known each other pretty thoroughly since."

The mother drew a heavy sigh. "I suppose," she said, after another protracted pause, "that it is useless for me to offer objections if you have both set your minds upon it. But she is all I have. What am I going to do without her ?"

Louis took her hand, which she left passive in his clasp. "Why should you do without her at all ?" he said in a voice that touched her. "I have no mother. Why not come and make your home with us ? When you give her to me I want to carry her off for a year or so. I have never been abroad, but now I mean to go. If you have no near friends here, I have one in Boston who will be a daughter to you in her absence, and whom you can not fail to like and feel at ease with."

"No," she said, the tears rising to her eyes, "I have no near friends. I have nothing at all in this world except my child. Be good to her, if I give her to you. I would gladly keep her, if I could, but I see I can not."

"God be good to me in that measure !" he said. "*You will not* lose a child, but gain one. And now

do you think that I might see her? I had not half finished my story last night when she found it imperatively necessary to leave me and come home."

Katharine came slowly, being summoned. To face either of them in broad daylight, now that the tale was told, seemed a thing beyond her. She stood at her mother's side with her hand upon her shoulder, her eyes down-dropped and veiled with their long lashes, unable to meet the other pair that she felt bent upon her. The mother regarded her steadfastly, and then her eyes turned toward the other face, coming back slowly to her daughter's.

"What can I say to either of you?" she began at last. "She is mine, but I have never had a hold upon her. She is a creature by herself, who follows her own ways and lives in a world of her own making. You love her and I love her, but are you any surer than I am that you can keep her when the time comes for her flitting?"

Louis looked up at the girl. His eyes also had dropped while the mother was speaking. Now they met hers full, and lingered in them as they had done the night before. He leaned forward and took her hand where it hung down by her side, and drew her toward him.

"She is mine now," he said; "she comes of her own will, and I think she comes because she feels, as I do, that she is the other half of my soul. If we both mistake, we shall drift apart again. I promise her never to try to hold her one minute after she wishes to be free."

"Ah!" sighed Katharine, forgetting in that moment all her shyness, and every thing in the world but the man within whose arms she stood, and on whom her lambent eyes shone full as she yielded to and answered his embrace, "if I have followed my own ways, it was because they all led straight to you. And I am never close bound but when I feel my perfect liberty."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I DOUBT, Katharine," Louis said, the first time they found themselves alone together afterward, "whether I have dealt quite fairly with your mother. In the forum of strict morals and abstract justice I suspect I might find something to say against myself on that score. Why don't you look alarmed? How do you know that I am not going to ease my mind by confessing to having robbed a till or forged my master's check?"

Katharine laughed. "Give me credit," she said, "for some sense of the fitness of things. If I were forced to select a probable crime for you, I think I might hit on something more in character. But I would rather not listen to any confession at all. I have no fear of you."

"But don't you see that that is one reason the more for making it? As a matter of fact, you need have none. So far as that goes, I might spare my pride even with you—and if I had any where you are concerned I should very likely do so. I tell you because I find it easy; you don't so much unlock my tongue as turn my heart into speech. Otherwise the story, which, so far as it is known at all through me, is known only to the friend who listened to my ravings in delirium, might rest untold still. As things have turned out, I have nothing worse to reproach myself with than idiotic folly, nor any thing more difficult to obtain from you than sympathy. Within these last three months I have asked myself often what I should do if I could not assure myself on that point. I never was quite able to arrive at a decision. I would have come to you, I think,

in any case. Beyond that I was able to determine nothing. One alternative which might have resolved my difficulties, had they taken their worst possible form, was plain enough before my eyes, but I was not certain that my pride would let me take it, even for you. Suppose," he said, leaving the place where he had been standing since Mrs. Danforth left the room, and coming to sit down at Katharine's side, "that I had a dilemma to put before you. I would never have told you any thing less than the exact truth. What would you have answered me had the truth been this : Years ago, when I was a hot-blooded young fool, I was entrapped into marriage. I say entrapped, though I was so thoroughly enticed as well that I played my part of the farce with an eagerness and good faith that must have been amusing to the other actor. She introduced me in it on account of the absence of the player to whom the rôle belonged in actual fairness—an absence which was merely temporary as it turned out, but which she had reason to fear was likely to prove lasting. When he was ready to take his cue she lied to him, poor wretch ! as she had lied to me. Such a contingency must have been present to her mind throughout, for she could not have found much difficulty in covering up her traces where I was concerned. I never fairly understood until afterward her insistence upon absolute privacy in our marriage and our subsequent meetings. I would have been willing enough to publish them to all the world, but I yielded to the reasons she thought fit to offer. If I had been needed as a cloak at any time I was always to be ready in her wardrobe. As it happened, I was of no use at all to her, and I don't doubt she has regretted the one she put me to at least as often as I have. The difference between us was that when I ceased to be a possible convenience she did not choose that I should be a clog. She rolled me in the mire and left me there. She had even the cool audacity to confess the whole thing to me when she thought the time was ripe, and throw herself on what

she called my honor. How shall I explain it to you? The man who should have been her husband came back alive and well from the voyage on which he was reported to have been lost, and was ready not only to marry her, but to give her a position to which anything I could offer her was the merest trifle. It was well for her peace of mind—and, I suppose, for his, though I doubt whether that might not have been secured in the end much more satisfactorily in another fashion—that the letter in which she explained all that to me knocked me down as effectually as if I had been a bullock under the hand of a butcher. 'My honor,' to which she appealed, would have dictated a course of procedure which would have taken neither his nor hers into consideration. Perhaps she thought as much when she reflected on it further; at all events, when I came up from the edge of the grave both of them had disappeared entirely. There was one remedy open to me, it is true. I might have freed myself legally from the millstone I had tied about my neck, but my pride revolted then, as it has done ever since, at the thought of dragging myself publicly out of the slough. It was horrible enough to feel the filth sticking to me in private."

He stopped and looked long at the girl, who had been growing paler as he continued speaking.

"You are cold," he said. "Your hands are like marble. I don't want to torment you unnecessarily. The woman is dead. The first time I ever heard your name that piece of good-fortune was also announced to me, and by the same lips. I will be frank with you nevertheless. I did not believe the news. When I look for a reason for my skepticism I find it in two things. One was her last letter, in which she told me that I need never be afraid to act as though she were in reality dead. My instinct detected a sinister ring in that. If I could have found her in the first access of my fury I would have put her death beyond reasonable doubt in a much more satisfactory way. The

other thing was my recollection of herself. She was the perfection of the human animal—all the more perfect as an animal because the soul seemed to have been entirely omitted from her make-up. She was built to live, and to carry her vigor and the freshness of her beauty into age. Death and she were things too utterly antagonistic for one who had known her well to admit easily the thought that they had come conveniently together. During the early part of my misery I was constantly expecting that piece of information. She had lied so ingeniously to me for her own protection that I felt sure her benevolence would coalesce with her fears to lie me, if she could, into a false position which would effectually shield her. But it never came. My rage cooled down after a while, and I ceased to care very much about it. The sight of a woman was hateful to me, or I fancied so. Since I meant never to avail myself of freedom to remarry, what great odds did it make, after all! When the news came at last it produced no immediate difference in my hopes or my plans in life. The day I saw you changed all that. I went to Canada directly afterward to find out, if possible, the exact truth, but what I heard there, confirmatory though it was, roused my suspicions anew instead of dispelling them. I wrote then to the one man who seemed likely to be in possession of the facts, and the day before I came to you I received his answer. God had been good to me. My wife died several years ago. Peace to her memory! I owe her, in one way, a debt of gratitude. Perhaps but for her, and the purgatory she plunged me into, I should either never have found you, or, finding you, never felt myself free to claim you. And heaven, I find, is cheaply purchased even with a sojourn in hell itself."

The girl remained silent and Louis went on again.

"I have owned up the faults committed against me —I will make the measure overflow by confessing the one I was guilty of toward you. The morning that I

received the letter I spoke of I had been thinking of you after I awoke. I don't mention that as a rare occurrence. But I knew the Eastern mails were due —I had counted the days well, you may be sure. My longing for you seemed growing unbearable. The worst that could happen would be to find my suspicions confirmed. In that case what should I do? My repugnance to the idea of divorce and what in my case it would mean was unabated. I need not say, perhaps, that my aversion rests on no idea of right or wrong in the matter. For those who can bring themselves to seek it I think it right enough in certain cases, but I more than doubted my personal ability to do so. And then the thought came to me of telling you the whole truth if I found that you shared the feeling you had kindled in me, and asking you to go through the legal forms of marriage and run the chances that a secrecy which has been guarded well thus far might be so guarded to the end. There was something horrible in that idea, too. It would be asking you to live a lie which would be none the less a lie to our own consciousness though it rested there alone. But the moment I began to speak to you, and saw the innocent unreserve with which you gave yourself to me, without a doubt, without a question, I saw also that I could have cut my tongue out rather than suggest that plan to you. But I was not certain until then that I would, in the last resort, have offered you the other. Tell me, you who ask no questions, do you know what you would have answered?"

"No," she said slowly, and sighing between her words, "I would rather never know. You frighten me. I wish you had not shown me the abyss over which I hung." And then: "Poor woman!"

"Don't pity her! she was never worth it."

"But you loved her! And she might have kept you."

"*Don't* believe it! Even if the danger nearest her *at the time* had not been the greatest, and she had

seen fit for any reason to cling fast to me, her reign would have soon been over. She might have kept her crown, but she was doomed to lose her scepter. The lie in her always came through and cut me to the quick, even when I was at the height of my fool's paradise. Now that I love you, I know that whatever feeling I had for her was something else. Away from her, I could dress up in the garments of her beauty the creature she suggested to my imagination, but it was a mystery to me, even then, why she tortured me when I was with her and she was most gracious. I have hurt you," he went on again, seeing that she was still inclined to silence. "I have rubbed the bloom already off what was perfection. Did I not tell you last night that such a moment would never come to either of us again? And yet I have not meant to grieve you, but only to make you absolutely free of my mind and heart, as I know, without asking, that I am of yours."

"You have not grieved me. It is only—" And she stopped and sighed again.

"Tell me," he said, taking her in his arms, "what does your mother mean when she warns me that to clasp you thus is not to keep you? Are you putting out the wings of your flight already?"

"Don't think the bond between us is so slight as that. But my heart was so content this morning, and now it is heavy, and I know no reason why. Perhaps," and she smiled at last, "it is because you are sinking deeper and deeper in it. I did not think that was possible at first."

"But are you so elusive? So hard to grasp and so impossible to hold!" he asked, smiling also. "Your mother was like a prophesying sibyl, and I own she frightened me. I warn you that I am constant, slow to move when once I have cast anchor."

"I don't know what she means. My own ways have been straight ones so far as I can see, and they have lain for the most part parallel with hers. There

is one where I can not follow her, but only once in my life have I been seriously bent on taking another which directly traversed it, and I am not sure that she knows it even now. My struggle was with my father. I yielded and heard no more about it. But up to that time all my ways, whatever else they might have been, were certainly 'ways of pleasantness' to me. Since then—at least until they ended here—they have led to nothing but discontent and weariness."

"And that is the only attraction that has ever divided your heart with me?" he said, when a question or two had satisfied him as to her meaning. "I could find it in mine to share you with it."

"I wish you could," she answered, "but it is gone. There has been only emptiness there since, until you came and filled it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALTHOUGH her sympathetic outworks had been stormed and taken by the unexpected assault that had been made upon them, the inner citadel of Mrs. Danforth's common sense was still unbreached. It would have been strange if the thought of her daughter's marriage in some not very distant future had never occurred to her as a desirable and likely issue for some of the perplexities with which that future at present seemed entangled. But American mothers of a generation back probably speculated little, as a rule, on that contingency, and seldom formed deliberate plans having it in view. That their girls would marry sooner or later was a thing to be expected at one period of their lives, pretty much as chicken-pox and measles might be at another. Chance and propinquity were likely to bring about each result in its appropriate season, and with good constitutions and reasonable care the patients might always be counted on to survive the attack and gain from it a happy immunity against repetitions.

But in Katharine's case the mother had hardly ceased, as yet, to regard her as a child. At the time of her own marriage she had been several years beyond her daughter's present age, and the tie which united her to her husband had only drawn closer the bonds of a friendship which dated from almost the earliest consciousness of either. As her thoughts now followed the train of associations induced by what had just occurred, she reflected that she could not reproach herself with having been too easily won, even then. She had kept her lover dangling for a

while in a suspense which perhaps might have been more agitating had its result been less clearly foreseen, but which, at all events, had satisfied her maidenly pride, as the remembrance of it now doubly irritated that of her motherhood. Whatever might be the ultimate result of this hasty wooing, which seemed to have terminated where in all conscience it should scarcely have begun, the girl, at least, ought not to go scot-free of reprimand. Curiously alike as these two were in certain obvious ways, having the same tenacity of grasp and singleness of intellectual vision, the same apparent want of expansiveness and coldness of exterior, they were as curiously unlike in all that lay below the surface. If the depths of her heart had remained unstirred, as those of the majority of her sex probably always do remain, and she had yet lived the ordinary life of women, Katharine would have grown into a still more apparent likeness to her mother in the course of years, but to do so she would have had to crush out, or suffer to die by inanition, a thousand longings and aimless, vague regrets which the elder woman had never known. It was as if the same snowfall had enveloped, in the soft white mantle which veils all dissimilarities, here the unsuspected subterranean fires of a volcanic region, there a smooth, fertile plain lying under temperate northern skies, which, when its spring-time comes, blossoms with pale and faintly odorous flowers, and rustles, later on, with homely, nourishing grain.

Prepossessed as she had undeniably been in favor of Katharine's suitor by her only conversation with him, and quick as she was to recognize the advantages which might follow from an early marriage contracted under favorable conditions, what the mother was most clearly conscious of at present was an instinctive revolt, if not against the thing itself, at least against the manner of it. Nevertheless her criticism extended to her daughter only. As regarded men in general her creed was very simple. They were a sort of irresponsible

creatures, prone to hasty impulses, impetuous and rash by nature, and incomplete without that sober drawback of womanly good sense and prudence contemplated by Providence in instituting the indestructible and ordinarily inevitable tie of marriage. That a girl should be sought after was natural and to be expected, but it was equally natural that she should fly the pursuer and not yield at the first summons to surrender. She had, indeed, long felt that her daughter's nature lay in some ways outside the range of her understanding and her sympathies, but what she had observed at this unlooked for revelation of it was as incomprehensible to her as were the feelings by which it had been prompted.

"What does she know about him? What *can* she know about him?" was still the burden of her thoughts as she went about superintending the household tasks which had been suspended in this unprecedented fashion, and the early dinner to which, in spite of her scruples, she had determined to invite the victorious invader of her domestic sanctuary. "And how *could* she—oh!" until the exclamation, half-surprise, half-displeasure, with which her cogitations occasionally terminated when they reached this explosive point, excited Hannah's sympathies and drew forth from her a well-meant but coldly-received suggestion as to the stomachic value of peppermint essence. She followed Mr. Giddings to the door when he departed, to make an inquiry and give a prudential injunction.

"You are staying with the Whites?" she began. "You can not, surely, have mentioned this—this affair—as yet?"

"Reassure yourself," the other answered, with a smile. "I will wait now for your permission before making further disclosures." And then, seeing her disturbed and anxious face, "Really, I beg your pardon a thousand times for my precipitation. But if you knew how unexpected was the opportunity, and how

great the temptation to profit by it! Don't be too hard on her, I beg you. I see you have a rod in store, but, in all fairness, it is my shoulders and not hers that ought to feel it."

"Oh, *you!*" she said, with a fine feminine scorn which translated itself into her tone and gesture in a manner he found irresistibly amusing. "Men act according to their kind, of course. But so ought she!"

"I wish I could make you see," he answered, as he shook her hand in parting, "that it is because she acts so entirely according to her own kind that I find her so altogether charming."

"There is a pair of them," he mused, as he walked slowly down the hill, "and the mother's innocence is at least as characteristic and unworldly as her daughter's. But if Katharine's had taken the same turn, how inexpressibly uninteresting it would have been to me!"

Katharine had fled to the shelter of her own room when Mrs. Danforth re-entered the parlor, and there, for a while, the mother left her undisturbed. The girl felt an almost physical need of solitude and silence. The joy, the exhilaration of the morning had all vanished, and though the strength of the passion which had swayed her was undiminished—though it had been deepened, even, by the tale she had listened to—yet she had rightly compared the nervous shock she had received to that which one might feel who discovers at sunrise that he has been traveling, careless and unconcerned, on the very brink of a bottomless abyss. Gratitude for actual safety becomes for a moment a secondary impulse, and the imagination tortures itself with a vivid presentation of the horrors that have been escaped. It was characteristic of Katharine that when at last she put these from her by an effort of her will, and opened her consciousness once more to the sense of what seemed to her an absolute and perfect happiness, her compassionate thoughts went straightway to

the unfortunate woman whose history had revealed to her a hitherto undreamed-of depth of duplicity and guilt.

"Poor creature!" she sighed beneath her breath. "How could she bear to tell a lie to him!"

Mrs. Danforth, meanwhile, in spite of her perturbation, had settled herself mechanically beside the basket of mending which Hannah brought up from the ironing-table. But her needle moved more slowly than its wont, and accomplished fewer of those marvels of fine darning on which she prided herself with sufficiently good reason. Her purpose to give her daughter almost the first serious rebuke she had ever felt called on to administer remained as fixed as ever, but beside it was growing an increased satisfaction with the prospect that apparently lay before her. And when at last the girl came down and took her usual place on the hassock beside her mother's knee, and bent her head in silence over her work, the memory of the past which the child had made so sweet to her, and with which she suddenly seemed the only connecting link, softened her voice and made the task she meant to undertake more difficult than she had anticipated. But she warmed to her work when once she had begun it. A prolonged pause, which had nothing unusual in it save the mutual sense that something different from the ordinary commonplaces of daily intercourse lay beyond it, ended in the inquiry:

"How happens it, Kitty, that you allowed me to be so taken by surprise by this gentleman? Why did you never mention his name before?"

The answer to this was comparatively easy, though it came in a tone a trifle lower and more hesitating than usual.

"How could I? I heard auntie tell you that we met him, and that was all there was to say."

"Did you expect to see him again? Did he say any thing special to you last summer!"

"I don't know—I thought perhaps he might come

here with Richard. He said he was a friend of Mr. White's, but not much of any thing else."

"You are quite sure?"

"Quite."

"Then yesterday was the first time you had any talk together! Anna was out, I suppose! What time did he come?"

"I don't know. It was dark enough for Dinah to light the gas when she brought him in."

"And Hannah says you came home with a headache just at tea time? You made quick work, my dear."

The girl blushed furiously, but returned no answer. The mother went on again with her inquisition.

"How could you know your own mind if you had never considered it before? What do you suppose he must think of you for being so ready to throw yourself into his arms the instant that he held them out? You courtesied to him, perhaps, and thanked him for his kindness?"

This thrust came so near the truth that Katharine, finding no parry for it possible only drooped her head still lower and kept silence.

"He told me himself," pursued the mother, "that you accepted him at the first word, without knowing the least thing about his position or his prospects. I knew you were odd and unaccountable in many ways but certainly I would never have believed that a daughter of mine could have so little sense of what is delicate and modest. I am ashamed to have to say it to you, but your haste seems to me almost less than decent."

Tears of mingled shame and anger welled up into the girl's eyes. The mother watched them dropping on her work, and saw that even the fingers that held it glowed with a sudden red. She began to relent, and when she spoke again it was in a tone less like the *cutting* of a whip.

"*I have* nothing to say against him personally. He

seems an honest man and one likely to know his own mind. But you who are always blowing hot and blowing cold—how can you know any thing of yours? And then appearances, no matter how fair they are, are nine times in ten deceitful. For aught you or I know to the contrary, he may be just such another as old Sammy Fidler, who used to lie up in the Presbyterian graveyard, under a broken tombstone, with his six wives all around him, as if he were Bluebeard in the midst of his victims. He came over here from Ireland when I was little, and set up a school to which all the first people in the city sent their children. He was so well educated and so smooth and fair spoken, not to mention his having some money into the bargain, that every body made much of him, and presently he got one of the Pruyn girls to promise to marry him. She came very near doing it, too; but one morning a sloop from New York landed a veiled lady at the dock, who came into mother's the first thing, because our house happened to be nearest to the landing. She threw up her veil, and behold, she hadn't any nose—only a black patch, with two slits in it, where one ought to have been. They said she was the daughter of a wealthy man in Ireland, and that she tried once in a foolish freak to run past a sentry on duty, without knowing the countersign. The man put up his sword to stop her but on she went, and the blade came down and sliced her nose clean off. Her father gave her ten thousand pounds dowry, and Sammy Fidler married her. He got tired of looking at her after a while, I suppose, and ran away with a good share of her money, thinking she would never be able to trace him. But such secrets are like murder—they will out; and here she was, asking mother if she could give her any information concerning the whereabouts of her husband, Mr. Samuel Fidler. That ended Sammy's game for one while, at all events. He lived with her then until she died, and afterward found five other fools to take her place, one after another."

As usual, the current of reminiscence had swept Mrs. Danforth into the haven of placidity. She had in reality no doubt of the good faith of her new acquaintance, and was far from surmising the strength of poor Katharine's impulse to impart to her the grounds of her security in this regard. But the girl's loyalty had already been transferred into new hands, and she found nothing more convincing to say than "I thought you seemed to like him, mother. You said you thought him honest. And if he were not, he would not be the dearest friend that either Mr. White or Richard Norton has."

"I like him well enough—as well as one *can* like a stranger who presents his card and then asks for all you have as coolly as though you had simply been taking care of it for him all your life. But marriage is a more serious thing than you seem to think it. It lasts for life. You may repent of it a thousand times, but you can never undo it once. And that is why, for you especially, who seem to drop your friends so lightly and without the least regret almost before you have had time to know them reasonably well, it would have been better to let common sense and judgment guide you, and not such a sudden fancy as I have seen you take up so often already. How long ago is it since you were so wrapped up in that teacher of yours, Miss Falconer? I heard nothing but her name for one spell, and then it was all over."

Katharine laughed. "Well," she said, "that was different."

"I know it was different. But you are the same fickle-minded creature that you always were. You don't know yourself well enough to act in such haste. But you are your father's child all over in that way. It was a word and a blow with him, too; but he kept to his word when once he gave it."

Katharine's self-possession had returned by this time. "I am not really fickle, mother," she said. "I *am only* a scientific explorer. I have been geologiz-

ing for gold and have always hit on iron pyrites. Give me credit for never trying to assay and coin it. There comes Anna up the stoop. You won't tell her yet, will you?"

"Not I, indeed," rejoined the mother, whom the question had reassured. "I shall tell nobody until I have had time to think it over and make inquiries."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THE age of miracles has not passed," said Mrs. White, sitting that evening in matronly state behind the tea-tray in the library. "The impossible certainly happened to me this afternoon."

"Youthful simplicity spoke in that remark, Mrs. White," returned her guest, on whom her eyes had fallen as she finished it. "In my experience it is only the impossible which can be reckoned on with any degree of probability."

"Perhaps this ought to be counted as one phase of your experience, then; it went so far beyond the range of mine that I did not quite know how to receive it. Fancy, Arthur! Cousin Eliza invites us three to pay her a visit, to take tea and pass an evening with her."

"You will give Mr. Giddings rather an odd idea of the hospitable instincts of your relatives," said her husband, with a constrained smile, "if an occurrence which ought to be so ordinary strikes you in that way."

"Oh! you know how she is, Arthur. If she were a Romanist she couldn't have much stiffer notions about heretics and unbelievers. It is my father's cousin, Mrs. Danforth," she explained, turning again to Mr. Giddings, who was engaged at the chimney-piece in cleaning and filling the great pipe which formed the usual solace of his evenings, and whose use was not interdicted even here.

"My wife pretended at first to dislike my cigarette," Mr. White said the night before, when the question of an out-door stroll during its enjoyment was mooted,

"but I soon found that if I prolonged my smoke a little the doors between these rooms did not long remain closed. She is getting acclimated, and, like a sensible woman, prefers rational talk with tobacco to silence without it. Make yourself at home, old fellow. The house is wide, you see, and I retain ownership of just this one corner in it. But if tea is not served here I shall be much mistaken."

"The mother of the young lady whom I found when I came in here yesterday?" asked Mr. Giddings, with an unmoved face, tapping the bowl of his pipe gently on the marble as he spoke. "I might have mentioned, by the way, that I had met Miss Danforth once before. I think I told you in Boston that I spent a week in the Adirondack wilderness last August with a friend who hails from this city. He turned out to be an old acquaintance of all the members of their party, and they passed us on their way out of the woods."

"That is odd!" said Mrs. White. "She never mentioned meeting you to me."

"Wouldn't it be odder still if she had?" he asked. "If one kept in one's memory and talked of all the strangers one casually meets, life would not be long enough to attend to what few other things there are to speak of."

"That depends," said Anna, with a shrug and a significant smile. "Perhaps it will help us come to a decision on the affair in hand. I went up there this afternoon to propose to my Cousin Kitty to come home with me and finish the evening which her headache interrupted so *mal-à-propos* yesterday, but her mother was unaccountably stiff in her refusal. She astonished me, however, before I came away, by giving me the invitation I just spoke of, and doing it so seriously that I have been wavering ever since between surprise and curiosity as to her motive. Of course I told her I would bring it about, if possible. I knew I could count on Arthur, but you are such an uncertain quantity, Mr. Giddings, that I promised to send

word later on concerning our engagements. I left you a loophole for escape, you see."

"I am entirely at your disposition for the very short time I shall be here," he returned, "but a little curious to know why such an apparently commonplace invitation should seem to require a miracle to bring it about."

"That is because you don't know my Cousin Eliza."

"The thing is wider than that," said Mr. White. "Unless you had tried it, Louis, you would never understand the strength and bitterness of the religious rancor that still animates the elder generation of the orthodox part of our American community. The new leaven is spreading rapidly among their children, but it was a revelation to me on coming here to find myself regarded in so many quarters as a wolf in sheep's clothing, who must be kept out of the fold even at the risk of something worse than incivility and coldness. I have young people listening to me every Sunday, and teaching in my Sunday school, whose parents refuse to recognize me in the streets, and would not hesitate to spread any kind of prejudicial report they thought likely to result in driving me from the city. They are beginning, though, I think, at least in certain quarters, to consider that a man may possibly have some claim to the ordinary courtesies of life in spite of his belief or want of one. For example, I received last week a note signed by a temperance committee, all of them members of orthodox sects, asking me to be one of a set of speakers on that topic in different churches throughout the city. I accepted as a matter of course, and to-day's post brought me a notice that I have been announced to hold forth in one of the Methodist meeting-houses some evening in December. But it is uphill work. I have been tempted a thousand times to throw it over and devote myself to something that holds out a prospect of more immediate fruit."

"That is our old bone of contention," returned his

friend. "All that is of positive human value in your system, so far as I have been able to see, is just as clearly, and, to my notion, much more effectively and practically, taught in that you are endeavoring to displace. And the other has a decided advantage in the leverage it gains in motives you have put it out of your power to appeal to."

"You are less pugnacious than I am. The old Adam in me stirs at the sight of the dreary stupidities, the logical absurdities and downright falsities that underlie the structure of popular orthodoxy as it faces us here. I can't help hammering away at it and trying to make people see that what they are really aiming at—the perfecting of life, the systematic culture of the affections and sympathies, with a view to the gradual amelioration of humanity, has absolutely no connection with a set of arbitrary beliefs, let them concern who or what they may. To my mind, it would be quite as sensible to contend that a beaver or a bee must have clearly-defined notions on geometry before it can build its habitation, as that men must settle their base of action on a creed which concerns the next life before they can be trusted to do justice and love mercy in this one. All my personal experience goes to contradict that assumption, and my reading of the book of humanity in general confirms what my knowledge of myself had previously taught me."

"Happy man!" said Giddings, smiling. "The sweet ingenuousness of your boyhood flourishes in perennial bloom, I see. Supposing your contention to be true—perhaps it may be, in the long run, though I greatly doubt it—why should you rouse bad blood by refusing to let what is, on your own showing, well enough alone? You want men to be honest and industrious, good fathers and good citizens, and so does your next neighbor, who pounds the cushion of his pulpit and shouts himself hoarse in denouncing hell-fire on those who persistently refuse to live up to that programme. Which of you gets the larger audience

and produces the more immediate and permanent effect?"

"If that is your test, why not leave the cushion-banger at the outset and go on to his still more successful rival, the priest? I doubt if all the churches in the city, putting their forces together, could muster on a wet Sunday such a throng as I have seen overflowing the cathedral here and kneeling uncovered in the rain at six o'clock of a cold, winter morning. I have a certain respect, too, for the priest, for his creed, his methods, and his results, which I find it impossible to entertain for these others, who hate him with only one more degree of energy than they do me. I laugh to scorn his premisses, which are pretty nearly identical with theirs, but he is at least consistent in what he attempts to build upon them."

"He does seem to touch some springs which æsthetic ethics might possibly fail to reach, doesn't he?"

"Well, you, at least, have what looks like a substantial reason for thinking so. Something of the same kind, though on an infinitesimally smaller scale, happened, I remember, during my earliest experiences in housekeeping, with an Irish servant to the fore in the kitchen. Some of our belongings which had mysteriously disappeared during her reign below-stairs, reappeared again, at least as mysteriously, except on the supposition that she had been enjoined to return them, after her departure. A bundle was thrust into the area and the bell rung, one dark night, and there were our missing spoons, enveloped in a hitherto unmissed blanket. But what can you argue from that, except that there are a good many ignorant and vicious people in the world, and that coarse means are best adapted to them until the day when they can be reached by something finer?"

"I might argue," said his friend, "if I were concerned to defend the divine justice and the divine *mercy*, or even the divine veracity—as I might feel *myself* concerned supposing I called myself in any

sense a Christian minister—that all history and all probability going to confirm the notion that the ignorant and the poor will be the majority in the future, as they have been in the past, it would be natural to suppose that their Maker had adjusted means to ends, where their moral and spiritual needs are concerned, at least as nicely as in the case of the beaver and the bee of whom you were just now speaking. If moral responsibility has any deeper basis than the mere need of society for an effectual police force, it must have roots as profound and consequences as far-reaching in the case of a red Indian, whose most pressing present need seems to be deliverance from his white friend's whisky-bottle, as in yours or mine. If, to bring about that deliverance for either of us, it is necessary —as in his case, at least, it seems to be—to persuade us that we have accountable souls, that we can not escape personal immortality, and that it depends on ourselves to make eternity everlasting misery of a sort we can appreciate, or an equally intelligible happiness, I should myself say that either those statements must be true, or else that we may as well get what pleasure we can, right here and now, and in whatever shape we can find it, undisturbed except by the equal right of our neighbors to go and do likewise. Practically, the people who have settled the negro and the Indian questions for us thus far have acted on that theory, though I don't suspect them all of consciously holding it. Whatever their speculative notions may be concerning the immortal souls of the 'nation's wards' or those of their private chattels, they seem to me to have acted pretty steadily on the underground conviction that they don't possess any of their own."

"You are as impracticable as my Cousin Kitty," said Mrs. White. "If we have gone over that ground once in the last year, we have gone over it a dozen times. Isn't that so, Arthur?"

"Yes," he answered; "she is another of these people whose minds seem to throw a sort of calcium light

on just one point, and to leave them in total darkness on all others. When we were up near the Scottish border I noticed the ships coming into Newcastle for coals, and unloading their useless ballast of stones and earth. Ballast hills they call them as they gradually pile up—made of refuse from distant shores where it also possessed no apparent usefulness to mankind. Afterward, as we were returning to England from Paris by way of Havre and Southampton, I remember seeing in the outskirts of a little seaport town, where we passed a day, certain cliffs from whence much of this rubbish must have been taken, and the boats in harbor hoisting in their loads. I recollect thinking of Miss Danforth at the time. She might be of so much use in the world, if only she could get over her bad habit of looking straight at the immediate object in hand, and demanding *Cui bono?* before being willing to take one step forward. Suppose a ship, well built, full rigged, tide and weather propitious, refusing to start unless its hold can be laden with articles of real value. Dirt and rubbish are of value enough if they will keep it steady until it reaches the coal-bearing coast."

"I don't quite catch the force of your comparison," said Louis Giddings. "Argument by analogy, when the analogy is between a soul and a piece of machinery, is apt enough to be misleading in any case. If I were going to apply your figure I should begin by denying that any sort of ballast is useless, providing that it is necessary and the only thing to be had supplying sufficient weight. But suppose I deny that any motives you can offer me have force enough to keep me on a steady keel? I must, in the nature of things, be the best judge of that. I want to be sure that Newcastle exists, and that there are coals there, and that they will give me just the kind of warmth I stand in need of, before I shall put my shoulder to the work either of excavation or exploration. My pipe *is out and* so is my tobacco, and, reasoning from

experience, I conclude that if I don't go out also and stir myself up before bed-time I shall have more hours of wakefulness between now and morning than will be altogether pleasant. Will you take a walk, old fellow? I will return him in good season, Mrs. White."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON the whole, the course of true love in the case of these two ran with exceptional smoothness and rapidity to its appointed term.

"I begin to think," Louis said during one of the brief but frequent visits which diversified the winter, "that it is time to make a determined stand against so much unalloyed happiness. It alarms me by its unlikeness to any thing I have known before it. What do you say to propitiating Hymen and the Fates by an unbroken absence until April, and a total cessation of all correspondence? I might recover mental health and energy, on a *maigre* diet of that description. At present I am demoralized by superabundance. A sky all sunshine and the prospect of a future without clouds is too unprecedented to be real."

"I am not too happy," answered the girl; "I am only just happy enough. But I give you leave to stay away. You may send me a copy of the *Chronicle* now and then, with a marked article whenever you have any thing new and important to say about the tariff question or the attitude of Southern politicians, so that I may be sure that you are still in existence. I shall have my political horizon enlarged to a fabulous extent in that way. And, for my part, whenever I succeed in making a light gingerbread without constant supervision, I will forward you a specimen by express."

"You are a heartless little humbug, and I have a hundred minds to take you at your word. The sad thing is that I am too much of Tony Lumpkin's way

of thinking. I don't care about obliging you, but 'I can't abear to disoblige myself.'"

Katharine smiled and sighed at once. "Ah!" she said, "let us take the goods the gods provide and not look at them too closely. One of these days, perhaps, there will be nothing but the remembrance of them left to either of us. I am like you—I fear and hope, and never feel secure but when I know you are close at hand."

The marriage was to take place late in April, the earliest date which Mrs. Danforth would consent to fix.

"Things will be settled by that time," she argued, "or, at any rate, I shall know just how they stand, and can make my arrangements accordingly. Even that is far too soon for an ignoramus like Kitty. Her time has been simply thrown away for these last three years learning a lot of useless things and leaving her in utter darkness as to what she ought to know. From one week's end to the other I can't trust her to remember how much saleratus ought to go into biscuits or how much sugar into cake."

"It is fortunate that I hate cake," said Louis, "and that I am on the point of securing lodgings above a graham-bread baker. Saleratus has been strictly prohibited by my attendant physician."

"You laugh," the mother answered, "but what a woman needs to know is what belongs to the care of a house; and that this child of mine has yet to learn before I graduate her into marriage. It takes either a philosopher or a fool to make even a fire properly, they say; and as Kitty is no fool, she will have to submit to training."

The result of Mrs. Danforth's inquiries, made for the most part through the intermediation of her brother-in-law, had proved highly satisfactory. Mr. Warren was in a state of as nearly unmixed jubilation over it as was possible to a man of his temperament, taking to himself some unexplained credit as the

remote cause of a condition of affairs which relieved him of anxieties more pressing than he had heretofore been willing to admit.

"I was afraid," he said, "that it was going to be a pretty close shave, not merely to save any thing out of the wreck, but to wind up without a compromise and paying a percentage on the dollar. It would never have done to trust the girl's future entirely to the chance of your living, so long as there was any thing besides it, and my mind was fully made up that neither the house nor the rent from it should be diverted from her, even to avoid that disgrace, so long as I could stand between it and you. But now she and her husband can settle it when she comes of age, and meanwhile he is not likely to object to the rents accumulating until then. And if you are going to give up this house and take to boarding until they come back, you can easily manage in the end to pay dollar for dollar. There couldn't have been a better way out of the difficulties. As to the man himself, I took a fancy to him on the spot, and I don't often go astray in that direction."

On one point only the mother conducted her investigations in person.

"You are a friend of Mr. White's," she said to Mr. Giddings during the course of his second visit to the city; "do you share his views?"

Louis was beginning to comprehend his prospective mother-in-law, and was not, besides, altogether averse to a little diplomacy of the straightforward order.

"White's views are rather hazy," he replied. "I wouldn't like to be obliged to define them to myself or to listen too attentively to his exposition of them. I can safely say they are not mine."

"But you have some?" the mother urged. "You are not a professing Christian, I suppose—few young people are until they have had a good chance to find out for themselves that life is not all sunshine and

plain sailing. But you don't deny the truth of Christianity?"

"I don't deny—I don't affirm. I simply know nothing. Speaking literally, I suppose I ought to call myself a Christian; I certainly was baptized one."

"Umph! what has that to do with it? I was baptized one, too, when I was a baby, but there was not much Christianity in me until I was converted. Your people were Episcopalians, then, I take it?"

"No; my mother went just one step back of that. As for my father, he was like most men who die at forty after a life too busy and too happy to leave room for much thought about uncertainties."

"One step back?" Mrs. Danforth repeated, with a disturbed face. "You don't mean that your mother was a Catholic?"

"Precisely, but one who had the misfortune to lose her faith."

"You have curious notions about misfortune. Then you were not trained that way? It is well for you, since you are bent on Katharine."

"You mean that it would have made a difference with you?"

"I would never have consented. I could not have prevented it in any case, I suppose, but that would have marked the limit for me. An unbeliever is bad enough, but an idolater is worse."

"Oh! I am an idolater, if you come to that," he answered, turning the subject with a jest. "Haven't you observed my unremitting devotions at the shrine you have here?"

"It is a shabby pair of divinities you have between you," she retorted, "but at least they are better than stocks and stones."

Katharine had listened in silence to this dialogue, but later on she returned to the subject of her own accord.

"You were fencing with my mother awhile ago," she said. "Why do you do that?"

"I have such a respect for truth," he answered, smiling. "I hate to waste it. Besides, though I fenced, all I said was literally true. I don't deny and I don't affirm Christianity, and I am, as a matter of fact, what the majority of Christendom has for nearly nineteen centuries agreed to call a Christian. That is as certain as that I am my father's son and hope some day to be your father's daughter's husband. Why do you accuse me of fencing?"

"Because that is just what you were doing. But tell me, what is it that you really believe? The night I saw you at Anna's"—and the blood came up hot again in the face that kept, nevertheless, its steady, serious eyes bent full on his—"I remember often—I never shall forget, I think—all that you said to me, and how repeatedly the name of God came to your lips. You have said it sometimes since, but not often, and not that way. What did it mean to you?"

"When you ask what one means," he answered as seriously as she had spoken, "you enter a purely intellectual region, and in that region such a question strikes me dumb. I have never been able to give myself an intelligible account of my intuitions, and, not being able, I usually succeed in banishing them from my consciousness. I like to be master of all I survey within myself, and, when in full possession of my waking faculties, these wandering tramps of the imagination get small hospitality from my reason. But there are things in one's experience which may fairly make one doubt whether the discursive reason really has a right to the supreme place we are inclined to give it—whether we do well to make it both executive and judge, and demand that even our deepest instincts shall bear its stamp upon their passports. I cried out to God when I found that you were mine, as inevitably, as instinctively as I suppose I shall do if I approach death with my consciousness intact. But what *I meant by it* I can not tell you. If I could I should

probably be a Christian in something more than the bare actual fact of baptism."

"Ah!" said the girl, "how often I have longed for God! It seems to me that my childhood was full of the thought of Him, and that it passed away only when that thought became obscured to me. I tried, too, to make my reason give me an account of that longing, when I turned back from the road which it had first pointed out to me, but it grew dumb, like yours. It speaks no more, but it never ceases to fret and to torment me. I am in a worse plight than you, for I can not cry out to Him even when my heart is stirred to its foundations. I feel guilty, and I don't know why."

"If I say," he answered, "that you and I have come together on ground lower than that of our intelligence, I mean simply that it supports and underlies it. We shall emerge into clear air in that region also in due time, I doubt not. My creed is very short even now, but it is very natural and easy for me to say *Credo in unum Deum* when I have you. I was always like the traveler in the fable. The sun thaws me out of my cloak, when the wind only binds it closer round me."

"How hard it is sometimes," the girl began again after a somewhat protracted pause, "to know what is right, when all your profoundest instincts draw you one way, and all your duties, or what you suppose to be your duties—certainly all your habitudes and all the inclinations of those who are about you—draw you in the other. You are looking for happiness, of course, but it seems to you then that it lies at neither extreme. When it came to the point with me I could not determine to take my own way; yet, after all, I took no other. And you heard what my mother said just now. The inconsistencies of Christianity, or rather of Christians, are what puzzle and perplex me most. She was quite in earnest. If you had been Catholic I could have gone to you only in face of her absolute prohibition. And yet they believe all that

she believes to be essential. And Mr. White denies it all, but she would not have refused me to you if you had owned to her that you do the same."

"She must stand or fall to her own Master," he returned. "Certainly it is for neither you nor me to judge her."

CHAPTER XXX.

ON one bright morning toward the end of the following April Katharine's quiet wedding took place in her mother's little parlor. Few witnesses were present, and Mrs. Danforth's minister performed the ceremony. There had been some slight discussion as to the propriety of asking Mr. White to undertake this task, but the mother's aversion to the plan proved invincible.

"It is bad enough to have him mixed up in the affair in any shape or manner," she protested. "If I could get rid of inviting him to be present I should be heartily glad of it. But as to having his name go into the papers along with that of your father's child, and setting all the church folks to gossiping about it, I simply won't allow it. I can put up with a good deal, but there is a limit!"

"It is a matter of exceedingly slight importance," Louis Giddings said afterward to Katharine, with whom this scheme had originated. "As a matter of fact, I never expect to feel a more effectually married man than I did the day I persuaded your mother to relinquish her hold upon you. I think she is quite right to please herself about all the rest. White is a very good fellow. He won't mind it much, I fancy; and as for me, I shall not mind it at all."

"It is I who dislike it," said the girl. "There are so few things that I can say yes to with all my heart and mind that, when I am able for once to do so, I hate to hear any jarring note mingle with it. I never agree with Mr. White when he makes positive affirmations on his own side, but he is at least our friend, and

to all his criticism of the other, as it is represented by the minister, I assent entirely. Why should he be asked to meddle? What possible relation does he sustain to you or me?"

"What a thorough-going little Puritan it is!" smiled Louis. "You are your mother's own daughter, my child! Suppose we agree to accept him as the incarnation of her conscience, and of our anxiety to soften as much as possible what she is going to feel as a heavy deprivation. But for the cordial way in which she has taken to Mrs. Kitchener and the children, and my certainty that her liking for them can not but increase on further acquaintance, I suspect I might have been tempted to relent at the last moment and give up going abroad at present. It may be long before you see her again. I won't answer for myself when my back is fairly turned."

"I knew a girl once," said Katharine, "who told me, just before her marriage, that one of the things she looked forward to with most satisfaction was the liberty of choice she meant to claim thereafter between homœopathic globules and castor-oil in case of sickness. Her father was an old-school doctor. I laughed; but I thought then, and I think now, that it was only a very cheap and prosaic way of stating a real difficulty. I wonder whether I shall ever feel myself a unit—able to act directly on my own convictions, or to refuse to act at all, if that seem good to me?"

"Whether you will ever escape your own shadow, in short? One might, perhaps, in a world without a sun. The most obvious shape it takes I hope to see you reasonably free from hereafter; but the dualism goes deeper. I doubt whether its external form is really its most annoying."

"I know it is not. Nine times in ten I find myself unable to pass a moral judgment, even in trifles, which my reason will not cavil at and call in question. I never see a fly entangled in a web without *setting it* free, but I never know just what right I had

to break up the spider's house and deprive him of his dinner. I could not have brought myself to act as Anna did last summer in the matter of her marriage, and yet I could not assign to myself one really satisfactory reason why she should not do so if it pleased her."

"You choose your examples in a characteristic fashion," said Louis, with a laugh. "Given a cold soul, a rapid circulation, and a lively curiosity, and you don't know what right you have to object to their working out their natural results. I don't think I care about trying to enlighten you. But if you fancy you see dilemmas in matters of such dimensions, I don't wonder that you zigzag—I wonder, rather, why you don't at once stand still. You can't escape your heart, you can't escape your conscience or your instincts. They go straight to their mark by virtue of their nature. But the mind is another thing. It is acted on by a thousand influences, it 'looks before and after, and pines for what is not'; and the safest way to treat it in certain emergencies is to recognize it for the balky horse it is, put on blinders and give common sense and will the reins. The conduct of life, for you and me at least, who start fair, ought not to be a problem of very great perplexity."

"If only," sighed Katharine, "there were guide-posts to direct the will! I don't want to close the eyes of my understanding. I want to harness it to my inclinations and drive them both together."

"Yes, I see. You 'want to be an angel.' That is pure modesty, I assure you. Your crown and harp are plainly visible to me already. But as to the ceremony which has brought about so much metaphysics, marriage, among civilized peoples, in its external form is a contract calling for certain formalities. Your mother's friend, to whom you object, is simply the minister of the law in my eyes, and as such inoffensive. To her and to you he plainly symbolizes certain religious ideas which she accepts and you reject. The

emotion you put into your rejection is proof positive that an affirmation of some sort underlies your denial. But so long as it takes no definite shape I recommend you to disregard it wherever it comes into the slightest danger of collision with the claims of affection and obvious duty. At the same time it is fair to say that my sole excuse for that piece of advice is my persuasion that it is altogether unnecessary. I would never have been in a position to offer it, otherwise."

Mrs. Danforth had made, at first, some natural objections to a plan which involved not alone the breaking up of her household, but the severing of all her old associations. But, strong as these objections were, they yielded to her conviction that she could not hope in any other way to be near her daughter for the future. It had finally been settled that she should resign her house to an incoming tenant as soon as possible after the marriage, and make a part of Mrs. Kitchener's family until Katharine's return. An acquaintance had been brought about between them during the winter which had proved mutually agreeable, though the wish was perhaps father to the thought in the mind of Louis Giddings when he spoke of Mrs. Danforth's cordial acceptance of the younger woman. They grew to be exceedingly good friends in course of time, when each had learned to appreciate the sterling qualities of the other; but, at present, regret over what was passing from her was too prominent in Mrs. Danforth's mind to leave room for much more than passive acquiescence in what was to come.

"She seems a good woman," she said to her daughter once during the week preceding the wedding, which Mrs. Kitchener and her little ones passed beneath her roof. "And I always liked children about me. But I shall be like a cat in a strange garret. If only you would give up this foolish plan of going to Europe! The greatest fortune that ever was *left* wouldn't tempt me to cross the Atlantic to get it,

and here you two are going for nothing at all, so far as I can see. What more is there than sky and land and water wherever you go?—and you have all that here."

"We will take you with us, if you like," returned Katharine. "There is time yet to secure your passage, if you can be tempted."

"Not I, indeed!"

"Well, then, the other plan is the best in every way. Louis seems to feel in some manner responsible for Mrs. Kitchener's welfare. He says he promised to look after the children, but whether the promise was made to her husband or himself I could not quite make out. And he thinks she will make a home for you where you will be far more comfortable than you could be here alone or elsewhere. We shall probably come back within the year. What a pretty creature the little girl is, and how jealous of me! She is the first child of her age who would not make friends with me at once."

The mother lifted her eyebrows.

"It is an old story," she said. "Two of a trade can't agree. She seems as much bewitched as you are, but she is younger and has more excuse."

"Isn't one's husband excuse enough?" said the girl playfully.

"He is not your husband yet, but even if he were it would not be. 'The Lord thy God is a jealous God,' remember! You can not stake every thing on one of His creatures, in the way you are doing, without losing."

Then, catching sight of her daughter's face, and a certain expression that contracted the lines of her mouth, "You don't like to hear that," she went on, "but it is true. You think now that you can get along without religion and without God, but, I warn you, you will see the day when you will find you can not. There comes to every one of us a time when every thing tumbles to pieces about us and leaves us face to face

with the one reality there is. It came to me, and yet I never ran the risk that you do, for I never made an idol in my life. I neither denied God nor turned my back upon Him."

The girl sighed. The subject lay so near her heart that, except with her lover, it was not easy for her to touch upon it. Yet her mother had spoken with the evident effort of a reserved nature, forcing itself from its accustomed reticence, and with so much feeling that to leave her altogether unanswered seemed impossible.

"I never denied Him," she said, in a voice so low that her listener barely caught it, "but I am not sure I never turned my back upon Him." And there her confidence ended.

When they were taking ship, after having fairly established Mrs. Danforth in her new abode, Richard Norton, who had been absent from home for several weeks, came on to New York to offer his congratulations and to say good-by.

"It will not be for long," he said, "if all my schemes turn out according to my liking. I have been laying pipe for an assistant-surgeonship in the navy, and have just heard that my chance is good, providing I can answer for the result of the examinations; and my doubts are reasonably small on that score. The Mediterranean squadron would suit me to a nicety, and in that case we might hope to meet somewhere next fall. But it is quite on the cards that I may be sent cruising off into the China Sea or the South Pacific. I will let you know whenever the thing comes to a head."

His was the last voice they heard that spoke of home—the last familiar face they looked on before turning their backs on the past to enter the new life together.

"He warned me once," said Katharine, straining her eyes to catch the last glimpse of him as the land receded, "that my lot in life would be to set up shrines, and his to bring the hammer to demolish them. But

he helped lay the foundation-stones for the first one."

Her husband laughed. "You hold out the cheerful prospect of a succession of them," he said. "It might be wise not to dispense with his offered services too soon."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE American colony in Rome was very full the winter after the marriage of this pair of lovers. They arrived there early in December, but with a half-formed intention of wintering still further south. They had not been very eager sight-seers thus far, but from the first had turned somewhat aside from the beaten track, making short journeys, resting at discretion wherever the humor took them, and each finding in the other, notwithstanding their many points of sympathy and the perfect *rapport* that existed between them, a *terra incognita* which presented more attractions than any other. Rome grew on them, however, and would have chained them until the heats began, even had it not offered, in addition to its proper fascinations, the charm of agreeable acquaintances, and, in the case of Louis Giddings, the renewal of one or two old friendships. Katharine's health also began to show some traces of over-fatigue, and they speedily established themselves in pleasant quarters, giving their evenings to much lively social recreation, and dividing their days between churches, galleries and museums, and some desultory, often intermitted, but never quite neglected, study of certain subjects in which Louis was interested, and in which his wife's intelligent aid had been of special service.

The artistic coterie was particularly strong that year, at least in point of numbers. One of the most prominent members of it, distinguished not alone in art, but by a native force of character and strongly-marked individuality which made friends and admirers for him among men whose sympathies lay for the

most part outside that region, was George Marlow, a Maine man by birth, a figure-painter by profession, and just then occupied with a large commission which had fixed his residence for several months in the city of the Popes and Cæsars. He had been formerly a great ally of Louis Giddings, but they met now for the first time after a lapse of years, during which Marlow had taken to himself a wife in his native Kennebec, and become the proud father of a son whom he regarded in all seriousness as an infant prodigy. He was a man whose opportunities for culture in the ordinary sense had been more than usually limited, and, though he was an intelligent reader, a close observer, and had a picturesque vigor of expression which made him specially interesting, yet his sense of deficiency in certain elementary matters was almost morbid. It showed itself, among other ways, in an ill-concealed pride in what he took to be the superior attainments of his wife, and a belief in her as an oracle in questions of what he called "education," which belonged to the simplicity of his artistic temperament and augured well for it, but was rather amusing none the less.

Mrs. Marlow was a pretty woman, who returned her husband's admiration with great fervor, but, owing to her adoption of the same standards, believed in her own intellectual superiority even more firmly than he did himself. As a matter of fact she had taken the color of his opinions in a way that flattered his marital pride exceedingly, but she did it by virtue of a chameleon-like quality of mind which promised less well for the permanence of the dye than for its present intensity. She had taught school in Augusta for two or three winters, and would probably never free herself from that particular variety of inexact pronunciation produced by a long-continued devotion to the mild form of dissipation known as spelling-matches. They occupied an apartment directly over that which Giddings and his wife had taken, and, while the two

men renewed their ancient intimacy with much satisfaction, Katharine, who for the first few days kept rather quiet within doors, found Mrs. Marlow's easy, superficial chat agreeably amusing. Her heart was a good deal better than her head, for it was genuine and kind, while the latter presented a kaleidoscopic variety of ideas and impressions, caught up from books and conversation, and retained without assimilation.

"There are two distinct sets here among the English-speaking people," she said one day. "Pagans and Papists, George calls them. Then there is another, not very large, which swings between the two—like the Lindsays, for instance, and Maria Rawson. I wish she were here just now, for she always devotes herself to new people—of course with the view of seeing what she can do in the matter of conversions, but making herself amazingly useful and entertaining at the same time by way of preliminary. But she went off on what she calls a pilgrimage last week, and won't be back for several days. George told her her pilgrimage was a pure humbug; that she ought to have put peas in her shoes and walked, instead of going off by rail. There is no making her angry, however. She might better have staid here and minded her work. She will never get her picture done at this rate."

"Is she a painter?"

"After a fashion. She has been working at art for two or three years, and came on with us this season to study under George's direction. But she is beginning to waver in her allegiance since Lindsay opened his studio."

"Who is Lindsay?"

"The smartest man in the world, I sometimes think. Your husband must know him, for he is an old Bostonian, though he has lived a good deal abroad off and on. You never saw such polish and such delightful manners. George says there is no heart in it—

that it means nothing at all; but I am not so sure about that. In any case, it is very agreeable to be treated as if you were a duchess, or that princess in the fairy tale who never opened her mouth without pearls and diamonds falling out."

"I shouldn't think that sort of treatment could be any great novelty to you," said Katharine, laughing. "I am sure Mr. Marlow seems to be of quite the same opinion."

"Well, it is and it isn't," said Mrs. Marlow, with a toss of her pretty head. "That was one of George's great attractions at first, I don't deny; but I begin to find out that he is very set in his ways, and does not take kindly to any change of views which he does not introduce. He is the dearest fellow in the world, and I do believe he is one of the greatest painters. Our State legislature gave him the commission he is executing now, you know. He told me not to brag too much about that, especially before the Lindsays; but I think it is something to be proud of; George was always too sensitive for his own good. But it stands to reason that a man as devoted as he is to just one thing must be a good deal in the dark about plenty of others that lie beyond it. Why, for one book that he has read outside of art I suppose that I must have gone through half a dozen."

The two men meanwhile were making their way toward the rather distant studio of the painter whom Mrs. Marlow was discussing, and with whom both of them had long been on terms of friendship.

"I was very glad, at first, to see Lindsay settle down here for the winter," Marlow said as they strolled on together. "I was so fond of him—so impressed by him might be a better word—when I first came to Boston ten years ago. He was just back then from this side, and I was raw to a degree which even he might find incredible nowadays, if his memory were a little less tenacious than mine is—which of course it isn't. I have been making successes of one sort and another

since then—cheap ones, I suppose he would call them, and I shouldn't be ready to deny it—but at all events sufficient to keep his memory green on that score."

"Why should not he have made them also?" Giddings asked. "I am an outside barbarian, as you have told me a dozen times more or less, knowing nothing about art except from its literary side. I find that some of the Michael Angelos have a good deal to say to me; but then so has Beethoven in the matter of music, which I take it is no gauge of one's general sensitiveness. So I have been told, at any rate, by disgusted painters and musicians without number. But I have never heard any man of your profession speak of Lindsay otherwise than highly."

"It is impossible to speak of him too highly in certain ways. His delicious and, so far as I know, unique use of color, and what I supposed to be his originality and exuberant fertility in design were a continual delight and inspiration to me when I knew him first. He finesses too much, perhaps, to suit the popular taste. There is more science than art about him, when you come down to the last analysis, and that is fatal. And yet he is a consummate artist in his way. The trouble is that life is even more of an art to him than his pictures are. He schemes and plots, and adjusts means to ends, and thinks out combinations there as he does on his palette and his canvas. Art is a direct and simple thing, and that is why he comes within one of it and stops there. I was beginning to get over my long apprenticeship to him even before I came abroad. The foxy element in him got a little too prominent at times, and though I never expect to question his superiority in what is distinctively his own—his color, which is as subtile as his brains—it gave me a certain satisfaction to run him to earth in other directions. I used in my innocence to envy him his early and prolonged acquaintance with European art, but I never dreamed to what extent and in what manner he had actually

profited by it until I had grown familiar with the galleries myself."

"You mean——?"

"I mean that I have hugely enjoyed dropping in casually with him and bringing up with a round turn before a Titian here and there. There was even the photograph of a Sir Joshua in my portfolio the other day which it did me immense good to fling down accidentally before him. There is no need of taking a club to Lindsay. It would not have been the slightest additional satisfaction to dilate on the reminiscences they called up on my first glance at them."

"I know very little of his work," said Giddings, "and should doubtless be no judge of it if I knew more. I remember a little Venus which all of you fellows were going into ecstasies over, but which I thought clumsy. She would never have got an apple from me, unless I had had an orchardful on hand, and she no competitors. But the man himself I have always found interesting. The subtlety you speak of was a specially agreeable change from the sledge-hammer style of thinking one got in most other quarters. It is long since I have seen him, but some one told me he had married within a year or two."

"Oh, it was further back than that. Yes; he is married, and to a rich and charming wife. But if his marriage and its results were not at least as much a triumph of diplomacy as of inclination, I am much mistaken."

"What ails you, Marlow? Every man is free to criticise his neighbor, as a matter of course, but the particular tone your criticism takes is new to me—from your lips. What special enormity has Lindsay been up to now?"

Marlow made no direct reply—none at all, in fact, for several minutes. It was an old habit of his to fall into fits of abstraction in the midst of conversation, as his present interlocutor was not unaware.

"That seems a nice little girl you have brought

over with you," he began at last. "Since I fell in love with my own wife when I was fourteen, I haven't seen one that has taken my eye as she has. But women are curious cattle! They are all tarred with the same stick, I've a notion. Not one of them that isn't fond of change, amenable to flattery, and disgusted with wholesome criticism. To go back to Lindsay. He is a Marylander, as perhaps you know—as poor as Job and as proud as Lucifer. He belongs to an old Catholic family there, and has always made a pretense of keeping up to his religion. His brains are as good as yours or mine are, and I never believed in it as any thing more than a pretense—a part of his general attitude toward the crowd, as being a little better, or at any rate a little different from the rest. He married Sophia Cary very much against the wishes of her people, who were greatly opposed to it, partly on account of his poverty, partly on account of his profession, but most of all on account of his religion. I heard they compromised, or tried to, in some way in the end, finding the girl was bent upon it—tied up the property, I believe, and made him promise not to interfere with her belief, and to bring up any children that there might be Protestants. That last I know was done—old Cary, her cotton-broking uncle, told me so himself. But she was a rabid convert before the year was out, which was nuts to Lindsay, who chuckles over it like the Jesuit he is. He can suit himself about his own wife," Marlow broke off with a sudden energy, "but if he don't let mine alone there will be trouble."

"Just what do you mean by that, if you don't mind being more explicit?"

"Why, they came here a couple of months ago, and of course I was delighted to see and invite them to our rooms. They were both new to my wife, and Lindsay fascinated her, of course. I had no sort of objection to that in any form I supposed it possibly could take. Amanda is a woman of a great deal of education and reading, as you will find out, if you haven't done so

already, and Lindsay's ultra refinement and Spanish grandee manners took her fancy, as they do that of all other women. She is a very level-headed person, too, or I always thought so; and even if it had occurred to me that Lindsay's success with his own wife might have spurred him up in the convert business, I would have backed her good sense against him every time. After living in the house with that red-hot fanatic, Maria Rawson, for six months, and fairly beating her out of the field of discussion, as I have watched her do again and again, I had no fears for her whatever. But here she was telling me last night that she began to believe there was a good deal to say on the other side, and meant to look it up. It won't be well for her peace of mind if she sticks to that notion."

"As often as I have observed it," said Giddings after a pause, "that attitude of mind never ceases to be incomprehensible to me. What difference can it, or at all events ought it, make to you what opinions your wife may hold on a matter of that sort?"

"Would you like your own wife to insinuate that she thought you might be all wrong, and that there was a probability that some other man might be all right?"

"Is that the way she put it?"

"No, it isn't. But I was not born yesterday. I knew well enough what was at the bottom of it. Do you think you would find nothing to say if your wife hinted that there might be circumstances under which she would find it agreeable to become a Catholic, a Buddhist, a Spiritualist, or a Jew?"

Giddings laughed. "Why should I," he asked, "unless I am first going to deny that she has the same right that I have to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'? I think I might find it advisable under some of those contingencies, especially if they threatened to be successive, to give her the benefit of my advice and experience; but what right, when you

come to think of it, should I have to do more than that?"

"There is no question of right and wrong between man and wife. They are one, or they are two. However, I am making more ado about it than there is real necessity for. I was out of sorts about my picture last night, or my common sense and my knowledge of Amanda would have saved me from making such an exhibition as I did of myself. I'll buy her a bracelet to day and make it all up. Her mind is as sound as a dollar, and her heart as good as gold. And here is Lindsay's. I won't go in this morning; I have a model coming at eleven o'clock."

Lindsay, a slight, dark man, apparently midway in his thirties, came forward to meet Giddings in the ante-room of his atelier, with a characteristic stoop forward, in nowise owing to physical delicacy or real lack of erectness, and the look, half-vacant, half-intent, that belongs to short-sighted eyes momentarily divested of their glasses. He had his hat on, and a pair of gloves was lying across his left palm. Recognizing his friend's voice even before they reached each other, his face lighted up, and he threw aside his hat as they clasped hands.

"You have 'staid me in a happy hour,'" he said, turning back into the studio and picking up his glasses from the ledge of the easel. "I was just about starting out to find you, but hadn't yet been able to drop my brushes when I heard your knock. I was afraid it might be some one else, and went armed. I heard of your being here from Ralston not half an hour ago, so you see I was not losing much time. Just look at my design before I cover it up, will you? You won't know any thing about it, of course, but a fresh eye is always a good thing, and I have been locked up with it for the last three days and am half-blinded."

The studio was large and unusually well appointed, a strong contrast, in fact, to the little Boston eyrie, looking out over the bay across a wilderness of roofs

and with nothing but its light to recommend it, where these two had made their first acquaintance. The picture, moderate in dimensions, was explained by the painter to represent Beatrice, "couched in the woodbine overture," intent on Ursula and Hero in the sunny orchard.

"I have had the figures in and out a dozen times already, but I think I have got the two in the alley to my liking now, and am only waiting for my wife to come back to finish up with this one. But what about the honeysuckle?"

"It looks like it. What is this? Titania on her bank? You seem to be running either to Shakespeare or to botany."

"A happy combination of the two, perhaps," said Lindsay, with a laugh, and turning from the easel. "Will you have a pipe? A very old friend has mitigated an order for half a dozen tries at the 'great Williams' by leaving the choice of subjects entirely to my discretion. There is no hurry about them, fortunately. I am only feeling my way to the designs at present, and shall wait for spring to begin the real work. I can't tell you how glad I am to see you. Ralston says you have been joining the benedictine fraternity yourself. I hope you like it as well as I do. My wife went off to Loretto with a friend the other day, but I expect her back on Friday. But for that I shouldn't have been locked up here, and so lost the chance of securing you before Marlow got you in his clutches. You are not positively fixed in your present quarters, I hope?"

"Why not? And what better could one do? Marlow is an exceedingly good fellow, our rooms are all they should be, and madam seems disposed to be every thing that is amiable. And as to the distance, I conclude, from all I hear, that it is not impracticable even for light infantry."

"Our wives traverse it tolerably often. But it is pleasanter out here, I think; and then it would be

good to have you close at hand. Marlow is very well —a little inclined to be cocky, perhaps, or was so until the political job which ended in 'rewarding native merit' with the commission that brought him over. It was none of his doings, I will say that for him; but his father-in-law had an active finger in the pie. It wasn't in human nature to refuse, of course, but he has had the grace to be as much ashamed of it as though he were not going to do the work at least as well as any body else, and a great deal better than nine in ten."

"It certainly is pleasant just here," said Giddings, looking about him, and ignoring all the rest of Lindsay's speech. "This room strikes me as more to be desired than Marlow's workshop, though I don't know whether it is any better adapted to its special purpose."

"It isn't; but my wife domesticates herself here and in the two adjoining, and we have rather laid ourselves out to make the place all it should or might be. She paints a little, too, as you may have heard." She had, in fact, been one of Lindsay's pupils. "She is a veritable *Sancta Sophia*," he added, after an almost imperceptible pause, and not looking at his friend. "You have hardly been with Marlow two days without learning that, in at least one sense, 'all good things came to me together with her.'"

Giddings laughed. "I have heard of painters' colic," he said, "but what is the exact nature of the evil influence oil colors exert upon the moral character?"

Lindsay flushed slightly and then laughed also. "It is absurd, I own," he said, "and on my part quite inexcusable. But I happen to know that there is an edge to his tongue also. Each of us would be glad to owe a little less to luck and a little more to merit, perhaps. That is an amusing, good-hearted little woman he has married. My wife has taken to cultivating her very assiduously of late. I believe she

feels shocked by what seems to her the vast extent of Mrs. Marlow's spiritual destitution."

"Is that the way the land lies? You might hint to her, perhaps, not to be too diligent in her labors. Marlow appears to have a great objection to amateur gardening of that description. If you have been shut up so long, you couldn't do better than walk home with me and give us some advice about our itinerary. I remember that Rome is one of your old hunting-grounds."

"The very oldest. I came here fourteen years ago with my twin brother, who was doing his theology then at the Propaganda. He is dead now, poor fellow!—wore himself out among the Flatheads. There has not been a generation of us for the last two centuries that has not sent one son here. I am the last now—and likely to be, to all appearance! There couldn't be a better guide, you see."

"Your peculiar way of looking at things gives you a sense of proprietorship here, I take it, which most of us lack," said Giddings, with a half-inquiring accent, as they were on the street together. "You find yourself more in the general line of things than we do?"

"Well, yes. On the lowest conceivable ground, you know, there is a continuity between the present and the past which gives an agreeable fillip to one's imagination and historic sense. You feel yourself a Fifth-Monarchy man in a way which the originators of that phrase certainly did not contemplate, but which is very real. Of course one does not lack that feeling anywhere, but just here it reaches its apogee. There is another side to the medal. Fellows like Marlow, for example—who perhaps might be a little better up than he is on several things beside church history, but who answers well enough for a type—amuse themselves by bemoaning the still more ancient days, apostrophizing the old divinities, and going into metaphorical hysterics over what they call the irruption of

the barbarians." He laughed and shrugged his shoulders as he added: "There's a phase of that with which I do not lack for sympathy myself, but, take it all round, I find it anachronistic, to say the least of it. You have not been about much yet, then?"

"Not much; my wife is rather under the weather from a cold she took as we came on from Paris. The winter is before us, so that I have counseled her to keep quiet for a little, while I qualify as cicerone."

"You justify my faith in the law of compensations," said Lindsay, smiling. "Mrs. Giddings and I will make an exchange when Sophia comes back—I will answer for her side of it being without drawbacks; and as for you and me, perhaps we shall be able to lighten each other's miseries for a day or two? For dawdling and doing nothing, and feeling virtuous about it all the while, there is no place in the world like Rome."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"YOU don't really mean that I am the first Catholic whom you have known? I wish it had been your luck to fall upon a better sample."

The place was Katharine's sunny morning-room, where she still kept her sofa nearly half the day, and the speaker was the young lady known to her friends —and they were many—as Maria Rawson. She had returned the night before from her pilgrimage, with a perceptible addition to her always overflowing high spirits, and had just been amusing her present hostess and Mrs. Marlow, who had brought them together, with an essentially reverent and yet irresistibly droll account of certain of its incidents.

"She pretends to be a Catholic," Mrs. Marlow said as she rose to take little Jack out for his airing. "I am sure that if I believed all she says she does I should be in such a serious frame of mind that I should never smile again."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't," said Maria; "you would simply feel yourself at home and one of the family, and know that you were not expected to stand on ceremony all the time. I can't for the life of me help feeling gay just now," she went on, turning to Katharine as Mrs. Marlow left the room. "Mrs. Lindsay and I went off on our pilgrimage just on that poor woman's account—or, to be quite exact, on the little boy's—and I haven't an iota of doubt that we obtained our object. He's a dear little chap, isn't he? I saw he had taken to you already."

"He is a clever little man," said Katharine, who had been entertained by his prattle several times; "he

struck me as even too precocious. Do you mind telling me what you mean about going on a pilgrimage for his sake?"

"Well, I don't, though of course, not knowing you at all, I can't say just how it will strike you." She gave a quick look at Mrs. Giddings. "You will probably decide in your own mind that I am a fool—but I am pretty well used to that by this time. In the first place, he is an unbaptized infant, and, as such, belongs to a class which, together with the souls in purgatory, engrosses my sympathies to a degree that has made me devote myself entirely to their welfare. In the second place, I delight in the child solely on his own account; and in the third, I pity him to that extent, when I think of the dangers he runs by reason of the opinions of his father and mother, that I am going to shock you by saying that if I were only sure to get a chance to baptize him in time, I should be heartily pleased to have him brought back this morning on a stretcher and see him buried to-morrow."

"You are very bloody-minded," said Katharine, laughing. "I suppose you will let me shock you in return by saying that I believe you even less than I comprehend you. And that, if you knew it, is a very strong expression of incredulity."

"I quite understand it," said Maria. "So far as I have observed, belief and understanding always keep that relation to each other. The more you add to the one the heavier grows the other. But I will tell you more precisely what it was that sent us off to Loretto for him. You don't know any thing about Loretto, by the way? Well, ask me that another time. George Marlow is a very good man in his way, but his way, to most people—even to you, I fancy, who look too young and innocent to have got very far out of the ruts in which most American parents place their children—is what one might call peculiar. It isn't altogether his fault, poor fellow. He was thrown on the tender mercies of a hard-fisted and hard-hearted

deacon when he was six years old, and, according to his own story, was flogged and starved and worried into such a hatred for all he knew under the name of religion that to this day he abhors the whole Christian faith by reason of the misdeeds of Deacon Peleg Smith, who neither knew nor practiced it any better than he does himself. I see your eyes twinkling again," she said, interrupting her oratory at full tide; "but what do you think of a man who absolutely refuses to let his child be taught one single prayer? I was trying to persuade Amanda—we were school-girls together—to let me teach him the 'Our Father,' if she didn't wish to; but George flared up and told me if he caught him with one syllable of it on his lips he would shoot me! Yes, I thought I should make you look grave, but that isn't the worst of it, not by half! Amanda—well, she's a shallow little thing anyway; that is why she is always slopping over. She fairly out-herods Herod! Before I got my warning from George—I don't mean to say, mind, that I should have paid any attention to it, but they have kept the child out of my way ever since, except when one of them was with him—I had him in church with me one day, and told him a little about the crucifix:—just what one would tell a child who asks a simple question. To my horror she came into the salon one night—the Lindsays were both there, and she had been putting Jack to bed. 'Just think, George,' she began, 'somebody has begun talking folly to Jack already. He asked me as I was covering him up just now if—'"

Maria stopped short again. "I can't quite bring myself to repeat her words," she went on after a minute. "The little fellow had asked her if our Blessed Lord were not the best man that ever lived. 'And what did you tell him?' said George. 'Why,' she answered quite seriously, 'I said I thought that Marcus Aurelius was a better one, and then I went on to tell him a little about what he thought and did. And when I got through, he says, "Mamma if you'd a' told

me about Marcus Adrelius afore, mebbe I'd a' been a better boy."' You never saw such a face as Mrs. Lindsay's; and as for me I was obliged to leave the room."

Katharine, too, felt a great shudder of mingled disgust and horror.

"I am a very great admirer of Marcus Aurelius myself," she said, when at last she spoke, "but I should not care to tell a child a thing like that."

"After all, though," resumed Maria in a tone in which the apologetic accent was very perceptible, "that was low-water mark for Amanda. She has got more heart than head, and I don't believe but that something in herself revolted at her own words. And then she admires Lindsay excessively, and she had wit enough to see something of what she had done. We two planned then to go and visit the Holy House, where neither of us had ever been as yet, and pray for all three of them, but especially for Jack. It seems so shocking to stand by and see innocence corrupted and intelligence perverted at that age. For my part, an Indian mother laying her baby in the Ganges would be an infinitely less frightful spectacle than the one I assist at daily."

It was after this narration that Miss Rawson made the interrogation first quoted from her.

"I can hardly count Mr. Lindsay," answered Katharine, "knowing him so slightly. We have talked a good deal, too, but it has been about books and galleries for the most part. I should not have known he was a Catholic but for something Mrs. Marlow told me."

"He has always been one; it is no new thing with him. And, to tell the honest truth, he is the one exception I have seen to what I believe to be the general rule, that the Catholic who has always been such is a better and safer person than the convert. I don't mean to say he is not every thing he should be *now*, but certainly he did promise before his marriage that

if there were any children they should be brought up Protestants. His wife told me that herself. And he need not have done it; she would have married him in any case, though there did at one time seem good reason to suppose it would be prevented. Her people wanted to keep him to it, too, even after her conversion, and tried to insist on his having the one little baby they had baptized as she had been. I can't say what he would have done—men have such notions about giving their word and keeping it—but she said the promise was made to her, and accepted by her under totally false ideas, and was utterly worthless. Then the child died, and the doctor says she will never have another, which cuts Lindsay to the quick, for he is the very last of an exceedingly good old stock. And serves him right, to my mind. He had no business to think of trading away his birthright even for such an unexampled mess of pottage as Sophia Cary. How you will like her when you know her!"

"And are you a convert also?"

Miss Rawson laughed. "I am not only a convert, but what my friend, Mr. Ralston, calls a convert-broker. Would you like to hear about it? If I don't tell you, some one else will be sure to."

"Tell me yourself, then," said Katharine, laughing also. "I feel persuaded that no one else would do it half so graphically."

"I don't think they would myself. Nobody else knows all the points, or could naturally be expected to take so much interest in it. You see before you, my dear, though perhaps you may incline to doubt it in the absence of corroborative testimony, the very plainest girl that ever graduated out of Portland High School."

Katharine looked at the slight, nervous, wiry figure, the little, dark head, tipped on one side like a bird's, the somewhat prominent black eyes, the bony forehead, the unclassic nose, the wide mouth parting in a

smile over a set of dazzling teeth, the whole countenance lighted up with an expression of shrewd intelligence and genuine good-temper, and shook her head.

"Perhaps Portland is famous for its beauties," she said, smiling.

"That is very good-natured of you, especially as I believe that perhaps half of it is sincere. But what I say is true, notwithstanding. 'As homely as Maria Rawson' was what they used to say when I was eighteen—which was only seven years since, perhaps you will allow me to interpolate. I did not want for beaux, however, and had at least one persevering and persistent lover, who, by the usual contrariety which governs such things, was called the handsomest man in the city, and was certainly the richest and the most highly educated. He had made his medical studies in Paris, and got his degree at Oxford, so you may estimate his attainments for yourself. I never was quite sure I wanted to marry him, but I was very certain that there wasn't one of the other girls who would not have jumped at the chance; and as my own parents were delighted with the prospect, I finally agreed. Perhaps you think this has not much to do with the story you asked for, but, at all events, it won't detain us long; and though it isn't the usual introduction to my tale, something moved me to it this morning, and, as a rule, I follow my impulses when they are not clearly wrong."

"How can you tell?" said Katharine.

"Partly by the taste, if you know what that means, and partly by seeing whether they go clean contrary to any thing I positively know to be a duty of either commission or omission. Well, now to my story proper. I had a great friend—I always have great women friends. I have a presentiment that you are going to be one of them; and my presentiments are infallible. She was the daughter of a clergyman, but not of our church. I was born and bred an Episcopalian, and was a really devout one. We used to take

long morning walks together, getting up at six o'clock for the purpose, and trying to be as English as possible in the matter of constitutionals, cold water, and all that sort of thing, as a sort of decent homage to a man we both admired, and who had roused a good deal of ill-feeling one way and another, but chiefly by turning his back on Yale and Harvard and the New York medical schools, and 'performing,' as one of our neighbors put it, 'like a durned Tory ginerally.' I owed him that much, you know, as I had promised to marry him, and was beginning to be aware that I would never be able to give him any thing much more substantial. I called for Marion one morning, and, finding her indisposed, started off alone. On my way I happened to pass a Catholic church, the door of which stood wide open, it being summer-time. I looked in. Mass was going on, the altar was well lighted. It may have been a feast, perhaps; I don't remember. I had never been inside such a place, but the impulse took me, and I entered. Directly afterward the bell rang for the Elevation. I sat looking on until the priest lifted the Host, and then, if you will believe me, I was converted then and there, without the least previous instruction."

"I don't understand," said Katharine, in whom this tale awakened painful recollections.

"I can't explain. I only know that I was as convinced then as I am now, no more so and no less, that the Catholic Church taught the true religion and the only one, and that if I wanted to save my soul it behooved me to enter it without unnecessary delay. I waited until Mass was over, and then I followed the priest into the sacristy, told him who I was and what I wanted, took the catechism he gave me, learned it by heart, told my parents what I meant to do, was baptized, dismissed my lover, and here I am."

"But your parents—were they willing?"

"Not at all. I was an only daughter, but I had a younger brother. They locked me up for one day,

and afterward, when my father let me out, he told me he did not intend to interfere with my liberty, but if I used it in the manner I proposed I must never enter his doors again."

"But you persevered?"

"It was a question of heaven, you know. A house in Portland didn't seem very much to put in the balance against that. I was baptized, and then I went and staid for a week or so with our Irish washerwoman; but at the end of that time my father and mother came, as I didn't doubt they would, and took me home again."

"And were they reconciled to it afterward?"

"My mother became a Catholic within the year. I baptized my father myself as he was dying, because his relatives had mounted guard below and would not let the priest he asked for go up stairs. My brother is in the Jesuit novitiate now in Maryland. And as for my old lover, he is married to my old friend, and I am here."

Katharine sighed and said nothing. After a while her new friend began again. "People say to me sometimes, 'I wonder you did not go into a convent.' Perhaps you wonder, too?"

Katharine was lost in thought, and the question had to be repeated before it brought an answer.

"I know too little about your religion," she said, "to feel any intelligent wonder at any thing a Catholic may think or do after taking the first plunge. The thing that perplexes me, and to which I would like to go back, if you don't mind, is the answer you made me about your impulses. Had you no impulse not to give your parents pain? In your case all turned out according to your liking. But suppose it hadn't? Suppose that until the very end they had thought you wrong and refused to see you? Or take a stronger case. Imagine a child of your own bent on reverting to the religion you abandoned?"

"You speak with so much feeling," said Maria, "that

I am tempted to believe you know something of that struggle from experience. Yes? I thought so. Do you know, I have never yet met a person of mature years and intelligence who had not had the Catholic Church and its claims brought forcibly in some way or other to his attention, and made to feel in a greater or less degree the nature of his responsibility with regard to it."

"I don't know many people," returned Katharine, "but that thought has occurred once or twice to me also."

"Well, what do you suppose a fact like that means?"

"I don't think I care to dogmatize about its meaning until I feel surer that it is a fact. I should think it might be one of the cases where, as my husband would say, it would be safe to defer your generalization until your induction is wider."

"Ah! you are too learned for poor me. I never could remember which was induction and which was deduction. They are to my maturity what funnel and tunnel were to my childhood. I never knew whether I was going through a funnel or pouring molasses through a tunnel. Wherefore I will go back at once to your question about my impulses, which I know more about from having it forcibly propounded to me at the time I speak of, and feeling bound in some way to justify my action to myself. I am greatly tempted, however, to put one to you in the first place, and, that being the orthodox Yankee way of answering, I think I will. I haven't seen your husband, and don't in the least know what he is like, but I take it for granted you love him extremely. You look as if you did. Well, suppose your parents had obstinately refused their permission to your marriage, what would you have done?"

The color came to Katharine's face. "I don't know what you think that has to do with it," she began a little hastily, going on, after a brief pause, in

a more equable and measured tone. "Still, I don't mind answering you. It it had been only their unreasonable dislike—if there were no good grounds to base such a refusal on,, and no persuasions would have been of any use—I would have gone on and married him all the same."

"Because— ?"

"Because he was necessary to my happiness."

"The best reason in the world—the only tolerable excuse, in fact, it seems to me, for marriage. And if your choice had been really a good one no one would ever have blamed you, even if your parents had persevered to the very end in their unreasonable prejudice. And yet your happiness would have been lessened in some ways by the attitude they chose to take. That must stand for one part of my answer to your question. I don't say it is a complete one, but I do say that if there were no such thing as positive truth that might be known, and positive duty arising from it, there would be no higher law of action than the intelligent pursuit of one's own happiness."

"Every body doesn't think so. Some people and most books tell you that the highest thing is self-sacrifice—a postponing or denying of your own self in order to promote the happiness or good of others."

"I don't say it isn't. Mind you, I am talking only on the supposition that there is no positive truth and therefore no positive rule of duty. There can't be the last, so far as I can see, unless there is the first. In that case the people who preach self-sacrifice and self-denial, or at all events those who practice it under that conviction—which is quite another thing, I do believe—either find a certain sort of superior happiness in preferring others to themselves or they are very great fools."

"I know what you mean," said Katharine, "and I believe it is true. It was true for me at all events. There are two things that I know about myself. One is that I could never have deprived another person of

a positive good in order to take it myself, and the other is that if the good in question were essential to my happiness, going without it would never be the same thing to me as having it. But, after all, that does not seem to me to answer my question. One knows what happiness is of the sort you instanced just now." She colored again but was too much in earnest not to go on. "But in the case of changing one's religion I have never been able to see that there was any thing positive involved at all. There is nothing in what I was taught to believe that is not a mere matter of shifting opinion, concerning which nine in ten of all the people you know hold different views, and about which not one of those who profess to teach it can give you any exposition which is not on the face of it absurd."

"And the conclusion you come to?"

"Is that in what I know as Christianity there is absolutely nothing that is certain, and for that reason, to prefer one variety of it to another, at the risk of giving what may be actual and lasting pain to those who can not see it in that way, and whose feelings one is bound to consider, is a wicked weakness on the part of those who are strong enough to resist the temptation. The case is utterly different with regard to what one sees and knows and feels in this world. That is real and tangible. But what do we know about the other? Just one thing, as it seems to me. That no revelation which really came from our Creator could be so confused and contradictory as what I was taught as Christianity, and therefore no such revelation was ever made."

"Precisely so. You hit the nail on the head with a will that does me good. But I should like to know why you always take care to say 'what I know,' or 'what I was taught as Christianity.'"

"Because," said Katharine, dropping into a less animated tone, "there was a time when I thought that perhaps I had not been taught the real thing. I had a suspicion that your church might hold a more consistent

faith, and that I ought to convince myself on that point before deciding. But when the time for action came I found myself at just such a turn in the road as that which you describe. I went the opposite way."

"You ran an awful risk," said Maria. "I don't want to flatter you, but a person with an intelligence as clear as yours, who has seen the real issue as distinctly as you have, is playing with edged tools in acting in that manner. But tell me, if you know, what would you have done if you had examined, and felt persuaded, in consequence, that the Catholic faith were true? Would any consideration have prevented you from embracing it?"

Katharine turned pale. A passionate longing kindled in her eyes, which passed beyond her companion and lost themselves in the blue sky that stretched cloudless beyond her windows.

"Ah!" she said, "I would give my body to be burned, I would live in agonies and see all I hold dearest perish in them, if by so doing I could reach God and feel myself in union with Him!"

"He will take you at your word one day," said Maria, very much moved, and rising to leave the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LOUIS GIDDINGS and his wife were one night descending the Way of the Four Fountains after a day spent with the Lindsays. The great basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore was at their backs, its front bathed in pale light. They had lunched early in the studio, and then, after a visit paid in common to the not distant ruins of the Coliseum, the party had as usual divided into couples, the men going off to Via Margutta, with the intention of dropping in upon a compatriot or two, painting away for dear life in that ancient and shabby region, while their wives turned toward the cathedral of St. John of Lateran, where the preparations for the approaching feast were fast nearing their completion. They all met again at a dinner somewhat delayed by the late arrival of the gentlemen, and waited afterward for the moon to rise before separating.

"There is the signal for our rendezvous with the Marlows and Miss Rawson," said Katharine, getting up as its bosses shouldered into sight between the curtains. "Mr. Marlow said they would start from home at nine precisely, but Miss Rawson is more poetical, and told me to time myself by the arrival of the moon in Mrs. Lindsay's southeast window."

"Their differences of opinion seem to be radical and chronic," said her husband, glancing up at a clock on his right.

"Not altogether," said Lindsay, with a shrug. "Her faith in him as a painter is touchingly childish and implicit."

Mrs. Lindsay broke in—rather harshly for her, who

spoke usually in a soft and rather measured tone—almost before he finished speaking.

"Oh, that clock! It is one of our costly antiquities—not good for much except to look venerable and artistic. As a time-keeper it is mendacious to the last degree. I have a hideous little American black-walnut octagon in the next room which ticks in a distressing monotone, and which I hide away behind a screen, but which is of great service as a regulator for the rest of my timepieces. Maria's guide is a safer one if you want to watch the effect of mingled moonlight and lamplight in the river, and yet reach home in time for Mrs. Giddings. She looks a little tired already. Maria spent last evening with us," she went on, arranging Katharine's wraps about her with deft, kindly hands as she continued speaking, "and we accompanied her to your door, but I thought it was too late to enter. In fact, we drove back. Strolling about at night here is too apt to be a dangerous pastime for one to feel as free to indulge in it as one would at home. I have the greatest dread of Roman fever. They say it never gets out of your system when once it gets in."

"Is that all?" asked Giddings, coming up to say good-night. "A brigand or two, with stilettos, was the least our inexperience waited for after that preamble."

"Malaria is bad enough—quite as dangerous and a good deal more probable; isn't it, John?"

"At this hour it is too late for one and too early for the other. And I have spent a good deal of time here, off and on, without falling a prey to either."

"Yes; but your brother Frank carried the seeds of the fever to Montana with him, and died there of it in the end."

"That is beyond peradventure, I believe. My wife is a thoroughly patriotic Roman, you see, Giddings. She will grant you any thing you like as to malaria, but she puts no faith at all in the festive brigand, and

is twice as enthusiastic as I am on the picturesque values of dirt."

"I was born in Rome, you know," Mrs. Lindsay said, smiling into Katharine's eyes as she kissed her at parting.

"Was that intended as a statement of fact?" Giddings asked his wife as they were descending the hill. "I thought Mrs. Lindsay was a Bostonian."

Katharine came out of a little reverie.

"So she was, but yet it represents a fact to her, I think. She told me this afternoon that what had finally decided them to take a studio in this quarter, where hardly any foreigners come, was that they would be conveniently near to St. John of Lateran's church. She was baptized in it nearly three years ago, and said it seemed to her that she had never really begun to live until then."

"Rather a cheerful sentiment that for Lindsay, isn't it?"

"It belongs to such a different order of things, you know. If she was born in Boston she was married there also. And then Mr. Lindsay is a Catholic himself, and that she is thoroughly devoted to him must be plain to every body. Don't you like her very much?"

"I find her charming, especially when one takes her in close succession to Mrs. Marlow, or that pellet of animated quicksilver, your friend Miss Rawson. What has she been showing you this afternoon?"

"Herself chiefly. Not directly and intentionally, of course, but I asked her a good many questions, because she interests me greatly, and is very direct and open, though she volunteers so little. But her face when she was in the church was like a mirror. One saw all that it meant to her. And there are some things that it is easier to understand in that way than when one tries to look at them directly."

"For example—?"

"*Well,* the relics, for one thing. And then the way

in which Christ is made the center of a worship which is certainly divine adoration, but which keeps the fact that he was a real, veritable man constantly before the mind. We were watching the people go up the *Scala Sancta* on their knees, once this afternoon, and I felt certain that, if she had not hesitated about leaving me alone, she would have done as the others did. She explained it to me afterward."

"And with what result?"

"I hardly know yet. One gets a realizing sense here of the doctrine of the Incarnation, don't you think? I told her that I had been always taught that Christ was God, but that here the whole burden of the story seemed to be that God became man. She answered that it was that which had made a Catholic of her. Christ had faded in her mind into a half-historical, half-mythical personage, about whom there were a few apparently conflicting records, but who, for any special, lasting effect that He had wrought, seemed to be not vitally necessary to the religion which bore His name. She believed in God and in the immortality of her own soul, but said that, though she was an Episcopalian in outward fact, she was a Unitarian in reality. She had known no Catholics but Mr. Lindsay, and was never in one of their churches until she came here directly after they were married. What struck her most was what has struck me also—that here Christ lives, He is adored as God, He reigns as king, He is loved as man. She did not add this, but it touches me very nearly to see how He is surrounded in every body's mind by an ever-living ever-growing throng of men and women, who have simply dropped their bodies like worn-out garments, and gone to live with Him in a very near heaven, where they are not out of reach nor out of hearing. I find the invocation of saints, and the relics, the most natural things in the world; don't you?"

"Well, as to the latter, I haven't had the advantage yet of examining them with you and Mrs. Lindsay.

Don't put on such a disappointed air. I am ready to admit at once that nothing seems plainer to me than that genuine belief in historical Christianity, shared by a whole community, would necessarily embody itself in much such a shape as that of the Roman Church. Compromises in matters of fact are at least as unintelligible to me as they are to you. Mrs. Lindsay seems to have made a great impression on you."

"Yes; and yet it is not so much herself, I think, as what she says. She has a reason and an explanation for every thing in her faith, and what seem to me good ones. I found myself thinking, when she left me alone in the church for a few minutes, that for the first time in my life my mind seemed to be like soft wax—ready to take a mold and keep it. One thing she said particularly struck me. I had been telling her that the supernatural element in religion seemed borne in and pressed home upon me here in a way which made me sensible of how greatly I had always felt the absence of it elsewhere. 'Yes,' she said, 'our natural life is like a great, empty cup—good for nothing and useless until it is filled with the supernatural, which completes and explains and gives it value.' You can't know how empty I felt, and yet what a great hope came to me that I should not always remain so."

They were crossing the square, where the fountains were shining in the moonlight, and where they made a momentary pause near one of the recumbent marble figures.

"Yes," her husband answered, a shade of regret in his voice and in the eyes which regarded her, "I have a rather definite sense of your capacity for emptiness, as well as a very vivid recollection of what you thought, not so very long ago, would suffice to fill it."

"Should I long so for immortality," she rejoined quickly, "if this life had not been made so sweet to me that I tremble at every wind that blows, lest it should bring death on it to one of us?"

"Don't tempt me out here in the open, you shameless little creature!" he answered, smiling, his hand closing over hers, which had slipped down into it from his arm, "there are people yonder by the further fountain. That speech was not made in quite serious earnest, but you do take one with a delicious simplicity which makes you capable of great things occasionally in the way of provocation. We ought to walk on, I think. Marlow was to meet us here, but he is late. By the way, in speaking of her own baptism Mrs. Lindsay did not mention, perhaps, the Jew baby that His Holiness refuses to give back to its parents, although it was baptized without their knowledge and consent!"

"What do you mean?"

"Only a little affair that has been making a good deal of noise here and elsewhere while you and I have been burying ourselves in remote and ludicrous localities where newspapers are not. Marlow was freeing his mind to me about it after you went down last night. He gloats over it as certain to be the entering wedge which will split the temporal power to pieces, and the spiritual with it." And he went on to give her the outlines of the case. "How does that strike you?" he asked as he finished. They were just turning into the Via Ripetta, but had not yet come upon their friends.

"What else could either of them do?" she asked after a little pause. "What did you say to Mr. Marlow?"

"Come," he answered, laughing, "that is a leading and unfair question. Do you want me to do your thinking for you? You know very well that when a man is so cocksure about uncertainties as Marlow sometimes is, and so bent on establishing self-evident truths by formal proofs before he will accept them, he provokes opposition from the unregenerate heart of the meekest and most thoroughly convinced bystander. Did I tell you that he undertook to maintain the other day that 'all so-called axioms' were susceptible of

exact demonstration, and immediately got out a pair of compasses to put it forever beyond doubt that the sum of the angles of a right-angled triangle must always and everywhere be equal to two right angles?"

"But what did you say to him about the little Mortara?"

"You are not Marlow: one's arguments with you would naturally take another view of things. However, I asked your question in the first place. The thing is wider than Mortara *père versus* the Pope. It is the whole matter of the natural and the supernatural—or, in strictness, of Christianity against the world. Clearly, neither the parents nor the Pope are to blame for the state of affairs in this special instance; but since the thing has occurred, without the volition of either, I do not see that the latter could be reasonably expected to stultify himself, or to commit moral suicide by yielding to the pressure that is brought to bear upon him. Granting even that he could preserve the temporal power in that way, he would certainly give the death-blow to what his refusal must make it plain that he holds infinitely above it. The temporal power! In his place, and with his faith, I would see not merely every state but every other soul fall away from me before I would give in to any thing but physical compulsion!"

He had begun in a half-jesting tone, but he was speaking now in quite another.

"I told Marlow that if I had been on the point of making my submission to the church, which I have sometimes thought of within the last months, concession here would have put an end to all such thoughts so far as I am concerned."

"Is it true, Louis?" she asked in a soft, moved, eager voice, standing still again in her surprise. "Why have you never told me so before?"

"True enough, but not more true than that I think of many things which never take form in action. I did *not mean* to tell you now. There are some roads

where every one is called to walk alone, and this is one of them. Why should I have told you, moreover, when all along the possibility, the probability even, that I shall rest as I am has been perfectly plain before my mind? I had no wish either to hinder or to help you, especially as the end of your journey, if one let you entirely alone, has been growing more evident to me with every day that we have spent together."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TO Katharine life seemed at once to widen and to concentrate that winter, like a stream hurrying to the sea, swelled by new affluents, as well as pressed deeper in its channel by the ever-increasing burden of its proper mass. Looking back at this period afterward, it seemed to her that she could find in it almost no traces of her own volition, and that she had done nothing at every step but yield passively to the strong attraction which drew her onward. Freed for the first time from all external pressure, and urged by the imperious longing which, from the moment when it reawakened in her soul, seemed to dominate it and admit no rival, the marks graven by it in her memory remained indelible and nearly obliterated those of her contemporaneous struggle. The struggle was, nevertheless, a very real one, and at every stage of it victory was bought only at the cost of one of those acts of the will which are the true surrender of the heart to the solicitations of the Eternal Love, as those of faith are the homage of the intellect to the Perfect Reason. Strongest and weakest both, by virtue of her heart, that was the natural battle-ground chosen by Him who demands all from His creatures, only because it is the essential condition of His giving all in return.

The very nature of the aid her husband was disposed to lend her was in itself a hindrance. He presently abandoned his non-committal attitude and began to make an exhaustive study, not merely of the historical claims of the Christian Church, but of its philosophy and its doctrine. Left to herself, Kathar-

ine would not have plunged into so many intricacies. The Light which enlightens all men seemed to have shone upon her so directly, when at last she deliberately unveiled her eyes, that it gave her an impulse like that of Saul on the road to Damascus, when, "trembling and astonished," he asked only, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The first book that Maria Rawson put into her hands was Challoner's *Catholic Christian Instructed*, and it was the only one that was ever necessary. She wished then to receive baptism without further delay, and the step was strongly urged by both Mrs. Lindsay and Miss Rawson. But her husband counseled a delay, and gained his point.

"Reflect," he said to her, "that you propose to take a very serious step, of which neither of us can foresee all the consequences. The nearer I approach the church the more conscious I become of a stream of tendency which makes that supreme effort of the will by which one enters it the very last of which it will be capable. It becomes as much the slave of a rigid code of spiritual laws as the intellect already is of the proposition that two and two make four."

"They call us idiots when we doubt that in matters of the mind."

"Granted—and thieves, I suppose you would like to add, when we forget it in the realm of morals. I admit that also. But do you find nothing chilling in the thought that you will be no longer even theoretically master of yourself—no longer all mine—nor I all yours if I follow your example? I don't say that we might not both of us be gainers. I see very distinctly that, granting it all to be true, we might be infinitely so. But I am not nearly as prepared to grant that as I have sometimes supposed myself to be. The very wish to believe, of which I find myself increasingly conscious, makes me doubt the wisdom of yielding to it."

"Did you have any such scruples when you wished *for me?*"

"You touch the very bottom of my difficulty. You are real—or, if you are not, you are sufficiently so for all practical purposes. I had no doubt of your actuality, nor of your being exactly what I have found you. But you are very simple and straightforward. You say, I have intelligence and volition; the Power that made me must have them in an infinitely greater measure. You feel the great vacuum of which every one of us is more or less sensible, and you say, Nothing but the Infinite can satisfy me wholly, and hence the Infinite must be somehow attainable. You examine the Christian doctrine, and you add, This is admirable; it involves no contradiction, it wounds neither my reason nor my conscience, and therefore it is true, and I accept it. That is common sense, I suppose, and it may be common sense also which makes you disposed to regard the church as a living entity which carries its own credentials so unmistakably in its continued existence as to make close historical research into matters which touch only the acts of men, and not the working out of fundamental principles, useless, or at least unnecessary. That is all very well. I would not have you other than you are; but I was not made just in that way, or, if I were I have overlaid myself with a thousand wrappings that I can not easily lay aside. And, honestly, much as I desire your happiness, and firmly as I am convinced that you have no doubt that you will find it here, I dread to let go my hold upon you. Suppose the current carries you away, while I am never able to leave the shore! Wait, at all events. You will only know your religion so much the more thoroughly when once you begin to practice it."

"I don't believe that he is right," Maria Rawson said when Katharine told her the determination at which she had arrived. "You will know all the Fathers, and all the Doctors, and all the history from the year one down, I suppose, but what better off will you be in the end? Can't you see that if Christianity is true

it must be absolutely necessary that there should be some way to apprehend it which would not involve all that trouble?"

"I see it plainly, but if you knew how much I wish to have my husband go along with me at every step! We have been one thus far, and I don't want to leave him, even to go to the altar, if I can avoid it by a mere delay."

"Delays are dangerous, young woman. One prayer made after you have fairly given in would be worth more to your husband than all the philosophy you could discuss together between now and Easter. I know what he is. Once you say to him that you can stand it no longer and that you must make your submission, he will relinquish you at once. He is not like George Marlow. Amanda took it into her head lately to seek instruction also; I don't suppose much would have come of it if she had persevered, but he just bullied her right out of it. We had a little difficulty about it, George and I, and he makes it rather uncomfortable for me nowadays. I shall change my studio, I think."

"No," said Katharine, "Louis is not like that. He is goodness itself to me—and that is what makes it so hard not to do exactly what he wishes. A heavy yoke would be no yoke at all; I should break from under it by sheer force of living."

"Now, you listen!" returned Maria. "Anything which keeps the soul one minute away from God, when once it has clearly seen Him and knows perfectly what is His will with regard to it, is the very heaviest yoke that Satan can lay upon it. Do you suppose the devil has not fathomed your nature just as accurately as he did Amanda's? She told me she did not dare to disobey her husband when he suddenly altered his old ways, and, from letting her do exactly as she pleased in all directions, put his foot down that toward the Catholic Church she should not go. I think it rather flattered her a little when he first took that attitude—

She found it so unusual; and there are some women who seem to get tired of too much complaisance, and relish even a little brutality by way of change. It is the change though, and not the brutality, that pleases them."

Up to this time neither Katharine nor her husband had spoken with a priest, and, but for a seeming accident which took place about the middle of Lent, neither might have done so for some weeks to come. Louis had placed a limit beyond which he would not in any case prolong his wife's delay, and meantime such books as he required were easily accessible through Lindsay's intervention. But, being one day with the latter in the library of the Jesuit College, he came with mingled surprise and pleasure upon his Montreal acquaintance, Father Baptist. They recognized each other with mutual cordiality.

"The world is very narrow," said Giddings, making a trite remark. "I was thinking of you as I entered, and here you are."

"And here I shall be until after Easter, when, instead of going back to Montreal, I believe that I am to be sent to Boston."

"Better still," said Giddings, moved by a sudden impulse. "I have a piece of congenial work for you on hand, if you are at liberty to undertake it."

They began to pace up and down the room together, and Lindsay, approaching from a distant table and seeing them thus occupied, excused himself on the plea of an engagement and took his leave.

Father Baptist listened with interest to what his companion had to tell him.

"Yes," he said when he had finished, "I am always at liberty and at leisure for what is, after all, my only business. Moreover, the affairs which cause my summons here are nearly transacted, and I have all the time that you can ask for at your disposal. I shall be glad to make your wife's acquaintance whenever you and she are ready. But are you going to permit her to take *this step* alone?"

"I do not know, and every day I find myself still further off from knowing. The more I examine the structure of your religion the more perfect and compact I find it in every part, and the more thoroughly I understand the attraction that it has for a mind like hers, which is not merely upright and simple, but has a clear perspicacity and natural logic which have never been spoiled by any manner of sophistication. But the initial difficulty is what daunts me. Postulate a Creative Intelligence, and all the rest follows, as it seems to me, by an easy if not a necessary sequence."

"And you find yourself unable to admit that postulate? What have you been reading on the affirmative side?"

Giddings named a book or two. "But they are useless," he went on. "They supply no arguments which every man who thinks has not adduced to himself a hundred times already."

"Well, I have nothing newer to offer you than the old question: Canst thou by searching find out God? If you could look directly at Him,weigh and measure Him and define His exact value,He would not be God. Even the sun, which lends itself to those operations, blinds you if you try to regard it in mid-heaven. Tell me one thing, though: do you ever pray?"

"What to? And how? Would you have me say, 'O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul'?"

"Well, yes, if you can find no better formula. Are you sure that you really wish to believe?"

Giddings stopped to reflect a little. They had entered the embrasure of a window and were resting there. He lifted his eyes at last and looked directly at the elder man.

"Yes," he said with great deliberation, "I can honestly say I wish it. But I fear it is a barren wish."

The priest held out his hand.

"Come," he said, "for you there is but one way to make it fruitful. You need no further instruction, and you have already been baptized. If I put you to the test at once it is because I am convinced that you are honest and that the time is ripe. Come into the church with me and let me receive your confession. I will give you half an hour for preparation, if you like."

"Very well. I hardly need so much time, I think. The possibility of that transaction has been tolerably plain before my mind for some weeks past."

Then, as they emerged from the recess of the window, "You understand the art of striking while the iron is hot, I see."

"That is only the commonest kind of prudence. Sometimes, though, one fails to see when it is hot. But nothing has become plainer to me, as a result of a good many years of dealing with men's souls, than that what they mistake for intellectual difficulties are, nine times in ten, simple disorders of the will. I want you to find out for yourself how true was that saying of our Master: 'My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do the will of Him, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.'"

"Ah!" sighed Katharine her eyes lighting with a soft, tremulous joy, "then you went before me, after all! Oh, I am glad! I like to follow you, to be your shadow, your echo, even here. I could not bear to be alone. Then I need not wait any longer?"

"No; he will give you conditional baptism early to-morrow morning, and afterward we shall make our Communion together."

But that night Katharine's child came prematurely into this world, and, having been made the citizen of another, went out of it again while the mother lay unconscious.

Four days later the first gray streaks of a young March morning showed Louis, who had been keeping

a solitary vigil at her side, that she was regarding him intently, and with eyes that were clear from all traces of the horror and anguish that had torn his heart so many times already. He kneeled down beside the bed and looked at her in silence, fearing to chase back by a too hasty word the soul whose reappearance all but himself had ceased to hope for. Presently she put up her arms and closed them about his neck.

"Is it you, Louis?" she said. "And are we alive?"

"Did you think we were not, dear?"

"I thought I must be dead," she answered, speaking with some effort, and in a tone that made him dread that consciousness was slipping away from her again, "for I have been in hell. But I did not see you there."

Her hold upon him loosened as she spoke, her eyes closed, and she fell into a natural sleep, from which she wakened fully mistress of herself. This time, Maria Rawson was beside her, and a white-capped nurse hovered about the foot of the bed. Her husband, from whom the doctor's early visit had lifted the long burden of anxiety, had dropped at once into the sleep of profound exhaustion.

"For three days and nights he never left you for a moment," Maria said, replying to her inquiry for him, "and now I think we must let him rest. He is not far off—only on the sofa in the next room."

"Have I been so ill, then?"

"So ill that it seemed to me at last that nothing but your husband's will held you from following your baby into heaven. Father Baptist wanted more than once to baptize you, but he kept putting it off. Last night I tried to persuade him, but at last he told me that you would not die; that he had bought you with a price and knew that he should keep you."

The nurse came up and touched Miss Rawson on the shoulder. She spoke in Italian—the only tongue she understood—but her quick eye had read on the

sick woman's face that her strength was being tried too far.

"You must go away, miss, or you must be quiet. Don't you see what you are doing?"

Maria was instantly all penitence and promises; but the mischief had been done, and Katharine's recovery was again retarded.

"It is a curious thing about women," the doctor said, when he received the nurse's report, listened to Maria's self-accusation, and set himself to the task of reassuring the husband. "The best of them can't be trusted to hold their tongues until they have been under special training. Fortunately there is no great harm done this time. It will take her a little longer to pull around, but she will do it."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FAIRLY started on her road to convalescence for the second time, Katharine's recovery was rapid. Toward the close of it Father Baptist came to pay her one or two friendly visits, and, finding her well disposed and tranquil, availed himself of the opportunity to give her such final instructions as he deemed necessary. Her formal reception into the church took place the first day she was pronounced able to leave the house with safety.

"I am by no means certain that I am about to baptize you," said the priest, who had listened with much interest to such account as it occurred to her to give him of her innocent life. "Of course," he went on, seeing the mute inquiry in her eyes, "I shall do so conditionally, which, in such cases as yours, is all that is allowable. But I have so often received young people like you, brought up in honest and religious homes, where there seems to have been no willful error, and no darkness not purely intellectual and hereditary, and I have not infrequently found them so free from deliberate sin, that I could account for it satisfactorily to myself only on the theory that they had really received the baptismal grace and never lost it. However," he added, smiling, "there is something still to be done for you. Your enemy's attacks seem to have been made on your heart thus far, and really, now that he is worsted, I feel rather inclined to congratulate him on the skill and subtlety with which he planned them. But he is likely to change his tactics *hence*forward, and I shall be glad of the chance to

circumvent him, and safeguard that good little head of yours, which he appears to have neglected thus far, by the exorcisms and other ceremonies which ordinarily precede the rite itself."

A few days later they started on their homeward journey, accompanied by Father Baptist and Miss Rawson.

"I am not getting tired of Rome—far from it," said that mercurial little lady in proposing to become a member of the party, "but I can't live here alone; it don't quite suit the Lindsays to take me in and do for me; and as to staying on with the Marlows under present circumstances, I am obliged to confess that I am not quite equal to it. I thought I had spunk and obstinacy enough for any thing, but—" she stopped and shook her head. "Well, there's no use talking; least said is soonest mended always. I may as well give up at once and own myself for beaten. At present I am a mere bone of contention, and the quicker I take myself out of the way the better for the pair I serve in that capacity. I was in hopes you were going to stay abroad longer and would give me shelter beneath your conjugal wings; but, since you can not, I will betake myself with you to that happy land where the unmarried woman may abide secure, both in fact and reputation, without any need of a sheep-dog in the way of a chaperon."

She walked to a mirror as she finished speaking, and regarded her reflection with an amused and comical smile.

"In America every woman is safe," she went on, "who chooses to conduct herself discreetly; but wouldn't you suppose that even Italian common sense would accept that face as abundant security for my good intentions?"

"Yes, I would," said Katharine, laughing; "but far be it from me to flatter that egregious vanity of yours by telling you why I think so. On the whole, I am rather grateful to Italian stupidity this time,

because I shall be more than glad to have you go back with us. Until yesterday I had somehow taken it for granted that we should stay in Europe until the autumn; but now that Louis has shown me the letter that came from Mrs. Kitchener while I was ill, I feel that I can not get away too soon."

Mrs. Kitchener had written, late in February, to say that Mrs. Danforth seemed to be failing rapidly, both in health and spirits. A heavy cold, contracted in the fall, had left her with a teasing cough. Then rheumatism set in, and for a month she had been a prisoner in her chair, where she pined visibly for the presence of her daughter. The news added one more to the list of self-accusations with which Louis Giddings had tormented himself at Katharine's bedside, and he was now not less eager than she to turn their faces homeward. But it was mid-April before they were able to take ship at Liverpool.

They were walking up and down the deck one starry night, Louis and Katharine and Father Baptist, when she, reminded of it by the aspect of the heavens, began recounting to the priest the impression made upon her mind on the first Christmas of which she retained a definite recollection.

"Those graces which are granted us in childhood are very rare and very precious things," he said when she had finished. "I owe the gown I wear to one which dates even further back in mine than the one you speak of does in yours."

"Tell us about it, won't you, father?" she begged in a coaxing little voice that he found pleasant.

"Why not?" he answered. "It is very simple. I was a little Swiss boy, living in the diocese of which St. Francis de Sales was formerly prince-bishop. I was six years old, perhaps—certainly not more than that—when a band of Jesuits came into our neighborhood to preach a mission. The mission itself I do *not* remember, for I was too young to be permitted to *attend*. But I recollect very well the last Sunday of

it, when I went to Vespers with my father. One of the priests came out upon the altar, to make the final exhortation, I suppose. He carried a great crucifix, taller than himself, and as he talked he rested it on the floor beside him and clasped his hand about the cross. I don't know what he said—something very moving, doubtless, but probably beyond my small comprehension. What I do know is that he set all the people crying and lamenting, and, looking up into my father's face, I was terrified to see the tears streaming down his face also. That was an entirely new experience for me, and of course I began to cry as loud as any body, partly out of fear, partly out of sympathy. And suddenly a great light seemed to shine all about me—as I recall it, I see that it was within and not without me, but I was too much of a child then to have any idea of that distinction—and a voice said to me: 'You shall be one of them, hereafter.' I remember looking all about me to see who had spoken, and wondering that my father took no notice of what seemed to me to have been uttered in a tone so loud, that I expected the priest to rebuke the speaker. But nothing happened, and for some reason I could not bring myself to mention it, and after a while the impression faded. I grew up, went through my course at college, and the time had come for me to choose my profession before I thought of it again. I had never yet entertained any notion of taking orders, much less of entering the religious life. In fact, I was a rather wild lad, I am afraid. And then, as it happened, another mission was preached in my native village just after I had settled in my mind that I would devote myself to the study of the law. This time I made the mission. And on the last day of it the same phenomenon was repeated, in the same way and in the same place. The first one had faded completely from my memory until it was renewed and graven there indelibly by the repetition."

"The light and the sounds?" asked Giddings.

"Every thing, and in each of its details."

"And then?"

"Then I entered the novitiate, and here I am, a Jesuit priest, crossing the Atlantic for now the third time. The first was after the Sonderbund war, when they sent all of ours out of my native country. I have never been in it since. Yet I have an old mother living there," he ended with a sigh, "and a sister whom I have not seen since she was twenty. Ah! well, there will be time enough hereafter."

They were passing the bridge as he ended, and Miss Rawson, who was up there with some ladies, called to Katharine as she went by.

"Do come up here, Mrs. Giddings," she cried out, "and look at Orion backing down into the water."

"Why backing down, Miss Rawson?" asked the captain's wife, who happened to be crossing with him. "That seems to me a terribly unpoetic way of describing any thing so beautiful."

"Isn't that his hammer up in front? I supposed it was, at all events, and so I thought it must be his hind foot which he has just dipped in the sea."

She slipped her arm into Katharine's as she spoke, and, after looking at the sky for a minute or two in silence, they descended to the deck again and began pacing it in company. The two men meanwhile had gone on together.

"Tell me," asked Giddings, after they had walked awhile in silence, "do you think it wise to lay much stress on experiences such as you and my wife have just been recounting?"

"I am not sure I understand your question. What degree of stress do you suppose me to lay on it?"

"It remains in your mind, I observe, as the not dissimilar one has done in hers, and apparently you both date from them as the beginning of a long series of mental or spiritual changes which have resulted in bringing you to your present condition. Does not

that seem to be giving the marvelous, the purely supernatural, too great a play in what is, after all, a rational process—for the most of us, at least ! "

"I don't think so. After all, what is the raw material of all rational processes ? A fact or a collection of facts, isn't it ! Why should I ignore those special facts in my internal history, any more than the not more positive one that I was born in Switzerland fifty-five years ago come next Michaelmas ? "

"If you put it that way, none. Only the last fact has the advantage of being certifiable by witnesses, and of not running counter, even in appearance, to several hundred millions of similar ones, of a goodly number of which every one of us is directly cognizant. Personally I have as little doubt of one order of facts, where you and she are concerned, as I have of the other. But it has often seemed to me that Catholics —I speak now under correction and ready to receive any light you are ready to shed on the subject—lay themselves somewhat injudiciously open to criticism by being apparently ready to attach too much weight to the miraculous side of our religion. It is so strong logically, it can bear so well the test of close historical investigation, that I have a suspicion that it might be wise not to weaken its force on that side by flinging these other things in the face of such an incredulous age as ours. A sort of pearls before swine, isn't it ? "

"Well, there are several things to be said about it. The most obvious one that occurs to me at this moment is that I don't quite see on what grounds you conclude that I, for example, would be likely to throw a purely personal bit of history like that 'before swine.' "

"That is a fair hit," said Giddings, laughing. "You return me to my trough very neatly. Perhaps you will permit me to drop the personal question and repeat the more general one in which it is included."

"To that I answer that I think you are mistaken. Historically, you can not but remember that our religion is miraculous in its conception, miraculous in its propagation and its preservation. And what do you mean when you say it is strong rationally and logically, except that it is impossible to deny or to disprove it without at the same time denying not only the weight of human testimony but the data furnished by consciousness? The fact is, the skeptical virus has infected a good deal that still presents the outward appearance of sound health. The whole warp and woof of our modern mental habit is saturated with it. I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but yet I predict to you that science itself will one day break loose from the fetters that the rationalists of the last century laid on all of us, more or less, and, in the interests of sound knowledge and common sense, will refuse any longer to collar and turn out of court, discredited and uninvestigated, a whole order of facts as positive, as easily ascertainable, as well supported by testimony as any of those which rest in the last resort on special and personal experience. And what facts are there which don't rest on it, if you come to that?"

He paused for a little, but, his companion offering no remark, he finally went on again.

"To return to my own stray pearls and those of your wife, it is quite conceivable to me that He who made the heart, and who desires it to the point of asking for it, should sometimes make His appeal to it directly, and in advance of that appeal to the reason which, as belonging to another order of things, He leaves in general to the action of other causes. 'Give me thy heart,' He says, but never, 'Give me thy mind.' Why, except because the heart has been corrupted even more than the head, and needs to be lured by love and hope, or swayed at least by fear, while the right reason has only to keep its eyes

unclosed and deal with the facts of revelation as it deals with all those by which it lives from day to day, in order to escape that condemnation uttered by St. Paul when he declares that men are inexcusable for not having clearly seen and understood the invisible things of God by virtue of their knowledge of what is open and visible before their eyes?"

"You may be right; I think you are. But it is not easy to throw off one's life-long habit of regarding men and things, even with the best intentions in the world. However, and by way of apology about the pearls, my compunction suggests to me that I can not make it more effectively than by telling you a bit of my own recent experience which I had intended to guard for myself only. The night my wife came out of her long stupor I had it impressed on my consciousness, not by any sound or sight, but as if it were wrought into the very substance of my soul, not merely that the cry of my heart for her life was granted, but that she would have died and been lost, and through my fault, if I had not previously made my prayer efficacious in the way that you remember. More than that, that she would live to face with me some trial we should both find bitterer than death."

"It may be so," said the priest. "The balances of God are not like ours, nor is His justice blind. It is a more dangerous thing than we are apt to think it to turn a deaf ear to His special calls."

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY in January, 1861, a young American of the reader's acquaintance, who had then spent between two and three years in the service of his country, discharging to the best of an exceptional ability the not very arduous duties of an assistant surgeon on one of the vessels belonging to the China squadron, received news from home which rendered further continuance in the service both unnecessary and unwise. Necessary it had never been, in point of fact, except to allay a certain boyish thirst for adventure and an impatience begotten by the plodding routine of a professional life begun a thought too early, and pursued with unremitting diligence, but not preceded by the four years of irresponsible, half-industrious idleness which make up the scholastic career of the average collegian. The relative to whom he owed his training and his start in life had urged upon him, with much affectionate insistence, the folly of absenting himself for an unnamed period from the place where a successful career lay all planned out before him, as well as the wisdom of familiarizing himself, while yet he could profit by the experience of his elder, with a run of practice and a *clientèle* of well-paying patients such as seldom fall ready made into the hands of the most fortunate of young doctors. But he had been unpersuadable, and, the means for travel on a more liberal scale not having been pro-

vided, he attained that end in a manner less suited to his inclinations, but more congenial, on the whole, to the well-marked independence of his character. He had gained by this time a certain amount of not very diversified experience, had gratified his passion for blue water and strange horizons, and found opportunity, while his ship was riding at anchor in the last port where she had been stationed, to perform on shore, in the family of one of the European residents, a delicate and dangerous operation which had gained him a good deal of local reputation and some offers for the future which many men of his age and position would have found irresistible. But, though he was growing as distinctly tired of the present routine as of that which had preceded it, these offers presented no attractions to him.

"Did you never hear that fifty years of Europe are better than a cycle of Cathay?" he said to one of those who pressed them on his acceptance. "Besides, what can one do with money in China after he earns it?"

It was about this period that letters from home apprised him, first of the serious illness, and then of the death, of his uncle. The blow was a severe one but was not a little mitigated by the news that he had become, in consequence of it, master of a fortune sufficiently large to put all reasonable objects of desire within his reach. He was not long in forwarding his resignation to headquarters. His vessel, however, was lying at Shanghai, while the flagship, with the commodore on board, had been for some weeks in harbor at Hong Kong. He was a general favorite with his brother-officers, and a party of them from various ships volunteered to accompany him on the steamer plying between the two ports, when he should go to ask leave of absence. A day or two spent in taking his farewells added one or two recruits to the party from among the foreign residents, between whom and the line and staff of the war-ships lying in harbor had

sprung up the comradery usually induced by the use of a common tongue under alien skies.

One of these, a lawyer attached to the little group of English government officials, was a man whose acquaintance with the young surgeon, though previously of the slightest, did not date from yesterday. He was in the neighborhood of fifty, a man of shrewd yet benevolent aspect, not thoroughly pleased with his present surroundings, and with well-marked symptoms that his aversion to them was likely to become chronic. He had a growing family about him, to whom he was tenderly attached, and whose future appeared to cause him some uneasiness. Opportunities for materially benefiting them were numerous in the present, while those that were in prospect were decidedly attractive. But he was a widower with young daughters from whom he hated the thought of separation, and a son whose abilities he believed above the average, and for whom he desired one of those home prizes which an Englishman rates above all other earthly goods. His early exile from his native land had put them out of his own reach, and in doing so had rendered them so much the more alluring to his imagination. The last evening of Richard Norton's stay in Shanghai was spent in his house, and when they parted Mr. Crawford, learning of the proposed excursion, declared his intention of accompanying it.

"The fact is," he said, "that I have business with his excellency of Hong Kong which will not bear putting off much longer, and, as the trip is one I don't particularly care for, the chance to go and come in cheerful company is too good to be neglected. I suppose you don't mean to come back here?"

"No," said Norton; "the matter of asking leave in my case is so much a matter of pure form that I shall go prepared to take an outgoing steamer from the island."

"You will point straight for home, of course?"

"*Well,* I don't know. I shall certainly not take

ship for New York or Boston, if that is what you mean. I have written to my lawyer to have an account opened for me in London. How long I may stay there I can't say, but long enough, at all events, to provide myself with the best set of instruments that money can buy. I have been aching for a long time to act on Emerson's advice and 'spend for my speciality,' and now that I have the chance I shall not let much grass grow under my feet before availing myself of it."

"Happy youth!" said Crawford. "What would I not give to have your years, your prospects, and your trip home before me! It is a mistake, this wandering about the world and leaving the home-nest empty. I was younger than you when I was obliged to turn out of it, but I never had your luck in being called back and set on my feet in the spot where they first began to toddle. Go the world over, and there's no place like it."

"Perhaps not," the young man answered; "but I am tolerably cosmopolitan in my tastes. America is such a big thing, you see. One's pride may compass it, and it certainly gives play enough to one's aspirations after freedom and independence, but it is a trifle clumsy for one's heart to put tendrils over. That tight little island of yours just lends itself to that sort of thing. I never yet ran across one of your countrymen who did not call it home, no matter how long he had been away from it, or however small desire he really had to go back."

"That is Yankee all over," said Crawford, laughing, "even to the admission that your heads are larger than your hearts. Your country has not cost you dear enough as yet; and then I suppose that what is every man's land is no man's land. For your spiritual growth it would probably have been a good thing for you to have remained colonists still. That would have cultivated your affections at the same time that it clipped the wings of your spread-eagle, and made you a little

more like ordinary mortals. Well, good-night; I'll meet you at the boat to-morrow."

"Sorry to lose you, of course, doctor," the commodore said in granting the required permission, "but at the same time, if things keep on at home in the way they threaten at present, I *don't* know how soon I may be ready to follow your example. Under strong temptation I might even take French leave for my ship into the bargain. If it comes to war—and it looks decidedly that way just now—the question of allegiance will be a ticklish one for a good many of us to settle."

"There won't be any war," said Norton dryly. "But if there should, honest men would know well enough to what and to whom they pledged their services."

"Ah, yes, I forgot where you hail from. The difficulty would lie just there, you see. The first shot fired on either side in war between North and South would be mortal for the 'whom,' and make the 'what' at once a matter for discussion. However, the first shot has not been fired yet. Since you are leaving us, I don't mind telling you that I learn through private advices that things are looking decidedly squally. Well, there is a P. and O. steamer starting for Suez at three to-day. If you are ready you can't do better than take it and avoid the Cape. Before you reach New York you may see reason to congratulate yourself that your resignation was handed in at a less embarrassing moment than I think is reserved for some of the rest of us."

"If I thought that," said Norton, "I would certainly withdraw it. But war, to my mind, is as far off as the millennium, and about as likely."

Before sailing, however, it was his luck to hear not a little talk of the same description, and to become aware, as he did so, of certain emotions that were novel enough to make him remark on them to his friend Crawford, who had gone on board the outgoing steamer with him, in company with several of

his old associates. At the moment they were standing apart from the others, who had gathered near the gangway to look at a group who were about crossing it.

"You heard what Lieutenant Jones was saying," he began, his face a little flushed, and his voice stirred out of its usual careless composure. "On our ship more of the officers than usual are Northerners, like myself—most of them, in fact—and to us the idea seems too absurd to be taken into serious consideration. But if I had to listen to many more remarks like that, civil war would break out over a certain very limited area without delay. I find I have more patriotism and more pugnacity than I thought for."

"I told you so the other night," Crawford answered, with a smile. "Like you, I don't believe in the possibility of civil war in the United States, but if there should be one I can fancy that it might bring some compensations with it. What are those fellows looking at? By Jove! that can't be—"

He left Norton's side as he spoke, and went hastily to meet the group the naval officers had been regarding. The most prominent member of it, a young lady in a dark traveling dress, close-fitting, and without the customary crinoline, who was on the arm of an elderly gentleman of distinguished aspect, turned her eyes on him as he approached her, with a smile of recognition, in which there was some evident surprise, but none of the half-stupefied astonishment plainly visible in Crawford's face. Following him with his eyes, in some amazement at his sudden start forward, Norton caught this expression with perfect distinctness. But the next moment two or three of the crew passed across his field of vision, and when they left the space clear the lady had her back to him, and Crawford was exchanging what were plainly the salutations of an introduction with her companion. But he turned at once to her when they were over, and began an animated conversation, which, after a phrase or two,

ended in her separating herself from her escort and walking slowly along the forward deck with the lawyer. The hour of sailing was close at hand, and in another moment Norton was again surrounded by his friends.

"You are in luck," said one of them, a member of the commodore's staff. "To be shut up on shipboard for six or seven weeks with the handsomest woman in Hong Kong—in the world, so far as I am able to speak for it—would make me pray for rough weather, a shipwreck, or any thing else that might prolong the pleasure indefinitely. Your friend seems to know her well enough to give you the chance of a presentation in due form, but he is so deep in his parley with her that it is doubtful whether he will leave himself time enough to make it. How disgusted M. Blondel looked at being left in the lurch in that way!"

"I did not see her face," said Norton, turning again to look at the pair, who had stopped near the bow and were plunged in hurried talk, in which Crawford was evidently the chief speaker. "Who is she?"

"A Mrs. Lloyd, who has been the belle of Hong Kong for some years past. I have not seen her often, for she has been a widow for the last twelvemonth and has not gone about much. But one hears of her on all sides. That was the French consul who came on board with her."

"There goes the bell," said another, "and here comes Crawford with the lady. Jove! she *is* a stunner! Well, good-by, Norton. May we never meet under less friendly auspices than we part!"

In the midst of the hearty but hurried farewells Crawford came up to make his own, and to disengage Norton from the group in order to lead him toward Mrs. Lloyd, who had now rejoined her own friends, all of whom were preparing to go ashore.

"There isn't half a minute," he said, "but I want to put a lady under your charge for the voyage. It is most extraordinary, but she is going back alone, with

not even a maid. I never was so surprised in my life as to meet her here. I hope you will excuse ceremony, Mrs. Lloyd, and allow me to present a young friend who may be of service to you both here and after your return. By the way, he knows one of your old Canadian acquaintances—"

The last bell rang before he could finish his sentence.

"Crawford! Crawford!" shouted half a dozen voices from the foot of the gang-plank. He wrung Norton's hand hastily and was gone without mentioning his name.

"He is a dear forgetful old man," said Mrs. Lloyd, smiling and waving her handkerchief to the group in which Crawford stood. "It is quite like him to leave me in ignorance how to address you."

"Is he old?" Norton asked as he remedied the omission. "I have been rather in the habit of considering him in a different light."

As he ended he made a final gesture of salute, a last hearty response to the shouts of farewell from the shore, and turned upon her his first really attentive glance. He met a pair of large, well-opened brown eyes, in which the expression blinded him for the moment to the exceeding beauty of their form and color, and the curling fringe of night-black lashes which heightened their brilliancy. Her beauty, in fact, perfect as it was in all physical details, and insensible as he speedily grew to any thing except it, came, after all, only second in the earliest impression she made upon him. Something in her unabashed and easy gaze reminded him of the unshamed license of an animal. But this impression was momentary and instinctive and soon gave place to others.

"Perhaps not," she said in answer to his last remark; "but when one has known a man from childhood, and played pranks with his children, one gets to thinking of him as old. At all events, that is what I had grown to do with Papa Crawford. He was so

busy in talking to me about my own affairs that I had no chance to ask him how he came here, of all the places in the world. Fate, I suppose. That is the best solution I have ever found for all my riddles."

"It is as good a one as any, and better than most."

"Then you are a Canadian," she went on. "I should not have guessed it from your looks."

"Not at all," he answered, somewhat perplexed. Crawford's remark, to which, as not addressed to him, he had paid small attention, had already slipped his memory. "Why should you think so, if appearances are against it? I was never in Canada but once, and that was the time when I met Mr. Crawford first."

"Because he said you knew a friend of mine there, and I was wondering who it could be."

"Well, as I know one family only, the clew to the mystery can not be far to seek. It must be Reuben Jennings, or perhaps one of his sons."

Mrs. Lloyd looked puzzled.

"I have heard my mother mention Reuben Jennings, but I have no personal acquaintance with either him or his sons. They left Canada for the United States when I was little."

"But they went back some half-dozen years ago. It must be they of whom he was thinking, for I assure you I don't know another soul belonging to that region but himself."

"I am sorry for that. Mr. Crawford knew that I should need some powerful friends when I got home, but he had so little time to talk that he omitted half the details I am dying to know. In what position is Mr. Jennings? Would he be able to give me real assistance in a matter demanding both influence and money?"

"I am not competent to judge. He has money enough no doubt, but what influence he possesses I *don't* know at all."

"*You* see," she said, turning as if to promenade the

deck—a movement which at once made it incumbent on Norton to offer her his arm—"I suddenly find myself in a most embarrassing position. Thank you! I am the best of sailors, but, even so, the motion of the ship makes a support agreeable. Mr. Crawford told me just now that I have been supposed dead for several years, and that in consequence of that supposition a good deal of property which ought to be mine was bequeathed by my mother to various institutions. Of course they will not be at all willing to resign it. I have a little money, but not enough to contest it with them unaided, and Mr. Crawford seemed to think that, even if I had, it might be difficult to do so successfully. The terms of the will, according to him, were very peremptory, and made so by my mother's express desire. But I will try it all the same," she went on after an almost imperceptible pause. "The fact is, I don't suppose my mother believed me to be dead. She had no reason to think so, for she was entirely responsible for the cessation of all correspondence between us. That is the theory on which I shall go to work, at all events. Mr. Crawford says the money was absolutely hers to dispose of as she pleased; but still, if to do so in the manner she adopted she found it convenient to deny the existence of her natural heirs, the proof that she might have known the truth, and probably did so, ought to go far toward setting her will aside. Don't you think so?"

"You have me at a disadvantage," said Norton, who found the situation embarrassing. "You seem to ask for advice, which is a difficult thing to give when one does not know all the circumstances of a case, and yet you speak with so much apparent candor that you tempt one to inquire further into what does not really concern him."

"I have no one else to advise with," she said, after another pause of some minutes, "and I am tempted to tell you the whole story and let you judge. The fact is I displeased my mother beyond her power of

forgiveness by my marriage. Yet she was really to blame for it, as she was for the harshness and cruelty that drove my brother into evil courses and made him an outcast and vagabond on the face of the earth. How such a nature as hers ever came to attract one like my father's, which both his children inherited, with perhaps a dash of our mother's obstinacy thrown in, used to puzzle me a good deal when I was a growing girl at home; but I understand it better now that I have seen what curious ties draw men and women together. However it came about, it made his misery and ours, and now, it seems, it has made my poverty. It has, that is, unless I succeed in persuading judges and juries that I was not only not dead when she made her will, but that she knew it. Now do you see?"

"I see what you have in your mind, of course. But if, as you said just now, she was free to dispose of her property without reference to her natural heirs, it seems to me that to prove she knew of their existence would only lay so much the greater stress on the validity of what she actually did. It would be more to the purpose to show that she was in error than to insist that she was lying on a point which, after all, interfered in no way with her right to do as she pleased. Would it not be more natural, and—I beg your pardon—more filial too, to take that view? I am still so much in darkness that you see I am not a competent adviser."

"True," she said thoughtfully, "that did not occur to me before. I was so confused at first by the unexpected news, that my mind went straight to the scenes that preceded my departure from home, and to others that lay still further back. Well, I will think more about it. In any case, you must admit that it is, on the face of it, unjust and unnatural that children should be deprived of what ought to be theirs by every law of common sense."

"So unjust and so unnatural that the course you

first proposed might put a very ugly weapon into the hands of whoever was concerned in contesting the case against you. That sounds unpardonably rude, I am afraid, but remember what you just said about your brother and try to forgive me. Where is he?"

Mrs. Lloyd frowned a little.

"He is out of the question entirely, poor fellow! He is in Australia, and if I say he can not come back you will divine that something stronger than his inclination keeps him there. I can understand that she should desire to forget or deny his existence. But she had no excuse for doing the same thing by me. She did not choose that I should marry when I did, and yet she knew the man was honorable and his position unexceptionable. I don't know why I should take you into my confidence in this way," she went on after a pause, during which Norton had been pondering the same question, "but I suppose I feel so irritated and outraged that, failing a listener, I might have apostrophized one of these masts, if I had found myself leaning against it. There was no reason why I should have left Hong Kong at all, and I would probably not have done so if I had not accidentally learned last week that this property had been left my mother. I thought she was living still, and that it would not be difficult to bring about a reconciliation between us. And, in any case, I did not suppose the money could be diverted from me in the way it has been. And then to meet Mr. Crawford at the last minute and have the cup dashed from my lips in this way! It is too bad!"

She looked up at Norton as she ended, with eyes filled with tears that in nowise dimmed their luster. One or two great drops rolled down her cheeks, in fact, before she found it necessary to brush them off, but her charming face was not distorted by her emotion.

"You will pardon my babyishness, I am sure," she said, smiling through them, and holding out her un-

gloved hand as they reached the companion-way, "and the unnecessary candor with which I have been boring you with my affairs. But it *is* so vexatious not to know what to do, and to have no one to advise with!"

"Pardon you? and for your candor?" he said, retaining her hand a moment. "I wish I might dare to hope you would honor me with it often." Yet, as he paced the deck in silence afterward, his sober thoughts were not favorable to his new acquaintance.

On shore, meanwhile, Crawford, after leaving the naval officers, turned in the direction of the government buildings, and was soon joined by the French consul. They walked along the Praya together, and the lawyer, whose thoughts were still full of this unexpected meeting, was not sorry to find his companion disposed to be communicative.

"Who is your young friend?" the consul asked after a little general talk. "I saw you had no scruple about running his head into the noose. Mrs. Lloyd is a lady whom, of course, I admire excessively, and for whom I naturally entertain the profound respect which your fair countrywomen universally inspire. At the same time I think she is perhaps a safer companion for men of the world like you and me than for young fellows of that age."

"He is a clever Yankee, who will be able to take care of himself, I imagine. What are you driving at? I have known Mrs. Lloyd since she was so high—and a handsome, saucy baggage she always was! She couldn't have been more than seventeen or eighteen when she came out here with Lloyd. She told me he died suddenly about a year ago."

"Suddenly is a good word for it," said M. Blondel, laughing. "His speculations in opium turned out badly, and he shot himself."

"What did he do that for?"

"I tell you he had heavy losses. If you have known *his wife* so long, you can probably figure to yourself *that she* might not be the most consolatory companion

in the world to a man in misfortune. I have a theory of my own, into the bargain, that he was beginning to tire of playing sheep-dog to her."

"Don't be so oracular. Remember that I have not seen her since she was a girl, when she differed from other girls chiefly by being handsomer and inclined to presume upon the fact. My poor wife didn't use to like her much, I admit, but she was very High-Church in her notions, and used to lay all her pranks to original sin, because she came of a dissenting family of I don't know what variety. But I have seen too many houses swept and garnished, and entered into afterward by devils, to take much stock in that explanation. There was really no great harm in her that I could ever see. She was older a good deal than my girls, but my boy who died and she were friendly enough to bring her often under my observation. What did she do out here to call for criticism of that sort?"

"Nothing that I know of. I never heard a breath of scandal touch her. But your wife's feeling about her is a specimen of what I mean. She is of the sort whom other men's wives have an instinctive dread of, and whom their own husbands stand guard over in a manner infinitely suggestive. Lloyd used to watch her as a cat does a mouse. Perhaps he found it wearing. At all events, he threw up the job and his life with it. She might have married twenty times over since then, if she had been so inclined, but she has shut herself up and behaved with perfect circumspection. She is going back now, she tells me, to take possession of some family property. That will suit her better than marriage, or I mistake her greatly."

"She was under an error on that head which I have just been under the necessity of clearing up. There was some property, but her mother, besides being incensed against her for some unknown reason, was under the impression she was dead, or said so at all events. She willed it all away so hard and fast that Mrs. Lloyd's chances to undo the knot are of the

slimmest. I had the tying of it, and although I tried my best to leave a loop-hole, lest there should be some mistake, the old lady was inflexible. I am sorry for her daughter—one can't help having a friendly feeling for a pretty creature like that, whom he has dandled on his knees."

"Of course he can't," said M. Blondel, with another laugh. "But she don't call for over much sympathy. She may be trusted to look out for herself. I am only theorizing about her, you understand. Women of her sort, in her position, naturally give food for thought to men of mine."

CHAPTER II.

LIFE on shipboard lends itself easily to intimacies. There is little to do but eat, sleep, and read, walk the decks in fair weather, and lounge or play cards below when it is foul. Dr. Norton had, indeed, provided himself with various resources for making the time pass in his usual industrious fashion, but his books remained unopened for the most part, while he gradually abandoned himself to such an engrossing study of the living, healthy subject as he had never made before. There were not many passengers, and Mrs. Lloyd was as willing as himself to keep aloof from the few there were. Their talks were endless, though, after the first day, they never recurred to the subject of the earliest one. It seemed to Norton sometimes, as he reflected on them in his berth at night, that they were fast becoming a sort of monologue in which his own acts, thoughts, and surroundings in the past, and his hopes and ambitions for the future, occupied a space of which he felt rather ashamed when he contrasted it with the very little he knew of his always interested listener. Every line of her supple, graceful figure, every soft curve and vanishing dimple, every flush of varying color in her charming face, grew at once familiar and yet enchantingly new with each new day; but beyond that it seemed to him that he knew nothing.

He had more leisure to reflect upon this fact when the chances of travel separated them during their journey across the desert, and by the time they took ship again at Alexandria he had resolved upon a change of base.

"Talk to me about yourself," he said to her one night when they had lingered on deck long after all other promenaders descended to their staterooms. "Here I go on, day after day, turning myself inside out for your—amusement, I suppose? I certainly can not hope it is for any thing more flattering to me, so long as you make no correspondingly frank response. I blush for my own fatuity when I recall the manner in which I must figure in your eyes. I wonder, if with so much evidence to the contrary, you could ever be induced to believe that I am not usually—that I never have been before—such an egotistic idiot as I must seem now."

"What can a woman have to tell a man like you? Would you have her own to him how much his youth, his energy, his sex, and, above all, his freedom move her envy? Besides, you must be amusing yourself at my expense now, as you so unjustly accuse me of doing at yours. Did I not give you my history and that of my family within the first half-hour I met you?"

"Who knows a man from reading the dates and names on his tombstone or in his family Bible? He was born here, he married there, he died at such an age. What clew to what he was, to what he thought, enjoyed, and suffered, does all that give? You are like the Sphinx. You tempt to all manner of inquiries, and make one dread that you will answer none."

"I seem to remember that the Sphinx is a stone idol with its head sticking out of the sand somewhere in the desert. My belief about her is that she never answers because she never has any thing to say. But what do you want to know about me more than you know already?"

"What do I know, I wonder, except—"

"Except what?"

"Except that you are adorably beautiful, and that while I feel persuaded that I offend you no more

than your mirror does by telling you the same story, I don't suppose I give you any greater pleasure."

They were walking aft, and the binnacle-light showed him that she smiled. But what she said was:

"You are quite right. What is the use of beauty to a woman? So far as that goes, your knowledge of me is quite accurate. Can I afford you any further information or corroboration?"

"Yes."

"Go on, then. I am all openness—and emptiness too, I fear, like my wardrobes and presses when I left Hong Kong."

"Tell me, then, why should you envy me either my youth, my sex, or my freedom? Your years must certainly be less than mine."

"I am twenty-seven."

"So much? But I should have remembered how long it is since you came East. But why should you desire freedom, who have power?"

"What power?" she asked, with a little ring of scorn in her voice. "For women like me there is no such thing as freedom. That is for men, or for women who have no desires, no ambitions, or at least no pride. And if I had neither I can easily imagine myself the slave of my own caprices, as I have been more than once already."

"I was mistaken," Norton said; "you are not the Sphinx: you are an oracle. You answer, but you leave me more in the dark than ever. I wonder"—and he hesitated a little, but then went on boldly—"whether you will tell me why you married?"

"Oh! for various reasons. Because I was a woman; because I was asked; because I was tired of being scolded at home. I married, as you ran away, because my mother was hard to me, and I thought any change must be for the better."

"But *not* because you loved your husband?"

"No," hesitating also in her turn, "not for that reason. I made the one venture for liberty that a young girl can, and it turned out to be only an exchange of servitudes."

"Then you have never loved?"

"No—yes—I don't know. The oracle is cold and sleepy, and would like to go below."

"But tell me—"

"No; I haven't any thing to tell. I don't know what right you have to put such questions, nor why I should answer even if I knew and were able."

"Will you give me the right?" he asked in a voice that shook a little, and laying his hand on hers as she was about withdrawing it from his arm.

"No," she answered, pulling it away and turning to descend the companion-way. "I gave that right once. Whoever gets it again will have to conquer it for himself." And she was gone, with a soft laugh that sounded to him like a challenge.

"We talk too much," she said when they met the next day. "I am not used to it and don't think I like it. Suppose you try to improve my mind by a little reading. It has been wofully neglected, I assure you."

"With all my heart. But what can I read you? There is a Bible down in the saloon, I see, but, except a Shakespeare, I have nothing with me but medical works."

"Oh! not the Bible. I learned too many chapters of it as a punishment for naughtiness when I was little to have ever thought of it since without a shudder. I suppose we shall have to fall back upon the Shakespeare. That will be unbroken ground to me."

"You don't mean it?"

"Why not? Do you know where I have lived? In Canada and in Hong Kong, and in neither of my homes were books in plenty. I have never even seen a *play* performed except by amateurs."

"*How* did you pass your time, then?"

"Do you know that you are very inquisitive? If my baby had lived I think I might have spent some of it in spoiling him; but as he didn't, I fell back on dressing and dining out, scolding my servants, looking at myself in the glass, going to the annual balls, and otherwise performing the duties of an idle woman."

"What sort of man was your husband?"

"He was my husband," she said shortly. "I told you I was tired of talking. Go now and get your book."

She took it out of his hand when he came back, and began turning over its pages, dipping in it here and there, and reading out a line or two as her eyes fell on something that caught her fancy. Finally she handed it back to him open at "Antony and Cleopatra."

"Read me that," she said. "Somebody used once to call me Cleopatra, and I shall be glad to learn the reason why."

"Somebody?"

"What a walking interrogation-point you are! Yes, somebody. You don't know who, and I don't know why."

"Very well, then; but I would hardly have made such a selection, if you had left the choice to me, even though our nearness to Egypt had suggested it."

"Why not?"

"For the same reason that makes me warn you that if you catch an awkward break in the sense now and then, or a line that does not go on all fours, you are to lay it to my clumsy elocution and not to any defective sense of rhythm or reason in the man who made the play."

"I don't know what you mean; but go on, and afterward I will borrow the book of you."

He cast a quick glance down the page, and began with Cleopatra's opening speech, reading on without any break through the first scene.

"There!" he said, as he finished it, "you see already why one might call you Cleopatra. You

brought these lines to my mind also when I left you after our first talk."

She smiled and leaned over his shoulder to follow them as he drew his finger beneath the passage.

"'Fie, wrangling queen!' I suppose?"

He laughed and went on again, growing more interested as he read, until she stopped him at the close of the second scene of the second act.

"Read that again," she said. "Begin about the barge and go straight on. Why am I not a queen, I wonder, and why does the world grow stupid and goody-goody as it grows older? I don't remember ever reading any thing in the *Court Gazette* that made me want to change places with Queen Victoria!"

"Here you are again," he said, stopping as he came to the last words of the scene. "'Age can not wither you,' either." And he looked up at the smiling face above him.

"How do you know? It has never had a chance as yet."

"It never will. You are youth itself, and vigor, and beauty, which would fail somehow of their end if they went on into decrepitude in the natural course. To be consistent you ought to go down here in mid-seas. Come, let us read no more to-day. The Nile is a muddy stream, and Cæsar and Pompey and Antony, and the Egyptian too, have been rotting for these nineteen centuries. The sun shines here on the Mediterranean this morning, the waters glance and ripple, and you are lovelier than the Serpent of old Nile in the days when she was as young and ignorant as you. I don't want to read you any more of the play. There is nothing else in it that you would find complimentary."

"You are not complimentary yourself in that remark," she answered, rising, though, and taking his arm. "If I am ignorant you should go on reading. I thought you began for the sake of improving my mind."

"Perhaps I think it can not be improved, or prefer to try a more original if an older method."

From that day onward their relations to each other changed. Whether Norton was consciously acting on the hint she gave him, or whether, as is more probable, the overflow of a first passion took naturally the mold of his imperious temper, his tactics altered, and as his success—a real one in its way—grew increasingly evident to him, it put to sleep the vague, instinctive misgiving that haunted him at first.

"Do you remember, Lena," he asked her one day when the voyage was nearly over, "that you either could not or would not answer me when I asked you first whether you had ever loved before?"

"I remember; but you did not ask me whether I had ever loved before, but whether I had ever loved."

"What is the difference?"

"Would you have had me answer that I was just beginning? What right had you to put such a question then?"

Norton was very much in love. He smiled the fatuous, triumphant smile which belongs to men in that condition, and sometimes gives them goose-flesh when they recall it afterward.

"You started on a search for freedom," he went on; "are you very sure it is your free-will which leads you straightway into another cage?"

"What freedom does a woman care for," she replied, "except that of choosing the place of her captivity with her eyes wide open?"

It was the first week of March when they reached London, and they were married there shortly after, by special license, in one of the city churches. Dr. Norton looked at his wife's name after she had signed it in the register when the rite was over.

"Evaleen Lawton Lloyd," he read out, and then looked up at her as she stood beside him. Her bouquet lay on the desk, and she was beginning to draw on her gloves again.

"I thought your name was Lena, or perhaps Helena. I have never known you sign it like this before."

"I never do except in cases where it is necessary to be exact. It is an old Irish name belonging to my mother's family which I always thought hideous. I soften the last half, and I am usually known by it."

"Were you called Eva as a girl?"

"Only by my mother and one or two old friends—Mr. Crawford for example."

"Did you ever know a man named Louis Giddings?" Dr. Norton asked, looking at her intently. She bit her lip and looked down as if to assist her memory, stretching out her hand at the same moment for her flowers. She must have grasped them hard, for a thorn penetrated her soft palm and drew a spurt of blood.

"O look!" she cried, "it is dripping all over my dress."

Then, as he staunched it with his handkerchief, she went back to his question.

"Louis Giddings? Was he Bertie Crawford's tutor for one summer?"

"I don't know what he was to Crawford. Then you knew him?"

"I knew Bertie Crawford's tutor. In fact," hesitating a moment, "he was very much in love with me, poor fellow. It was too late, though, for I was engaged already. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, no matter. Only, it must have been he Crawford had in mind when he spoke of my knowing one of your friends. I wonder it never occurred to me before."

No more was said about it at the time, but one day, as the honeymoon was waning, he asked her, apparently *à propos* of nothing.

"Was it Giddings, or your husband, who called you Cleopatra?"

"Neither; that was some nonsense of my school-girl days, further back still. What has become of

Giddings, by the way? I have never heard any thing about him since that summer. Is he a friend of yours?"

"The greatest I have. He was in Italy when I had a letter from him last; but he is a bad correspondent, and that was two years ago. He is probably back in Boston by this time."

"In Boston? That is where we are to live, isn't it? What was he doing in Italy?"

"He went there on his wedding journey."

"He is married, then?" her face dimpling into a smile of satisfaction. "I am glad of that."

"Why?"

"Because I often used to fear that I had hit him very hard, and he had the look, poor fellow! of a person who would not get over such a thing very easily. Some people are like that, they say, but I imagine they are few. I hope he has a charming wife, who has consoled him for it by this time."

"Yes," replied Norton, with a curious lightening of the heart that he was unable to account for, "he is very thoroughly consoled, I assure you. But you must have flirted tremendously with him to have left such a mark that he never even looked at another woman in the way of marriage until long after he heard that you were dead."

"How do you know that?"

"It was I who brought him the news from Crawford. How was it, by the way, that such a passion as he must have had for you did not tempt you to reconsider your engagement? You say you did not love the other?"

"What an immoral man you are, Dick!" she said, smiling and offering a caress. "Would you have girls break their word like that? And if I had, where should you and I be now?"

"Why should we go back to America?" she asked him a day or two later. "We are rich enough to

enjoy life over here, where every thing is much more amusing. I am an English girl by birth, you know."

"I don't propose to go back just at present. We will see Europe well together first; but, after that, America is the place for me, and my work more interesting, on the whole, than play. Besides I have an old father and mother who must be wearing out their hearts for me. I have not been the most filial of sons in the matter of going home often, and of late my conscience begins to give me a warning twinge or two. I am not sure we ought not to take a flying trip over before starting on any more extended travels."

The fall of Sumter, and the call for men which followed it, roused him to a quick determination on that point from which all the soft persuasions of his wife were powerless to move him.

"No," he said in answer to them all, "if we are to have a war with the South I am in for it at once. It won't last long, but it will be hard and heavy while it does, and I want my share of it. I suppose you think this is a case for saying, I have married a wife and can not come; but console yourself. The part a sawbones plays is not very dangerous at best, but if I manage to make you a widow again you won't, at least, be the widow of a coward. I will take you to my parents, or try to induce them to go at once with you to Boston, where my uncle's house is all ready for us. That will give me the chance to surround them with the comforts their old age stands in need of, and if you find any thing lacking to yours you can alter it to suit yourself."

"That is a cheerful prospect for me! Has your mother grown sweeter-tempered in her old age, do you imagine? Besides, I want to go to Montreal and make an effort to recover my own property. If you insist on going to war I will take advantage of your absence to look it up."

Norton frowned. "What is the use of that?" he asked. "As either my wife or my widow you will not

need it, and I thought Crawford advised you that it would be useless."

"He was not so positive as that. He said only that it would certainly be difficult, and probably impossible. But it is worth making the effort, as you must know."

"How do you propose to set about it? Do you remember what I told you when you explained your scheme to me?"

"Yes, and I have altered my plans in consequence. I saw at once the force of your objection, and shall adopt the one which you suggested."

"What is your own conviction on the subject?" he asked, sitting down opposite her and taking her two hands in his.

"On what subject?"

"What do you suppose to be the truth as to your mother's action, and her motive for it? Did she believe you dead, or not?"

"How can I judge her motives? As to her belief, I don't see what reason she could have had for it. I told you that at first. She opened and returned my letters, with '*unread*' marked across them, until I stopped writing."

"She must have been a cantankerous old woman—unless you were an extraordinarily obstreperous young one. Which was it?"

"A little of both, perhaps."

Both of them laughed, and then he went on again:

"You wish me to understand, though, that in any action you bring you propose to assume that her belief as to your death was genuine but erroneous?"

"Didn't you tell me that would be the safest theory to work on?"

"Are you aware that you will have to state your whole case to your lawyer—your own belief about the facts and your reasons for it?"

"Oh! certainly. I shall go to Mr. Rector. Mr. Crawford said he would be the proper person."

"And your means to carry on the case?"

"You will help me, of course."

He threw up her hands with a quick gesture of displeasure or disgust.

"You thought, then, that I would assist my wife to lie in order to recover money? Don't count on me. I have nothing to throw away in a struggle such as that."

"I have some money of my own! And you are very unkind!" breaking into tears. "It is very hard if I am to suffer for another person's lie in that way. I need tell no untruth at all, even to my lawyer. I would only have to show myself in order to convince any unprejudiced person that my mother must have been in some explainable error. What business have other people's orphans with money that ought to belong to her own? You are very cruel!"

"Come," he said, relenting and drawing her back to him again, "I admit that your way of looking at it is natural enough. But don't you know that a man's first desire is that his wife's lips should be those of a 'very honest woman,' and one not 'given to lying,' even by implication? And when the man is like me he prefers, also, that his wife should take all she has from him, and not feel herself overburdened or overpaid even then. Why should she, when she has given him all she is?"

"Men are very hard to women," she said, the tears still hanging on her lashes. "We like to give them all we have, as well."

"It is essential to keep up the balance," he answered, laughing; "we must be hard when women are as soft as you. Moreover, for an honest man, or, at all events, for a proud one, no woman has any thing but what she is. Put on your bonnet now, and, if you have any final shopping to do, we will drive out and attend to it, and afterward you may go along with me to take a last look at, and pay for, my instruments before having them sent home. To-morrow must be given to packing up and getting off to Liverpool."

She came and stood beside him next day while he was examining the tools in question, caressing them with eye and hand, feeling their delicate edges, and delighting in them like a child with a new toy.

"How dreadfully bloodthirsty you look!" she said, smiling, and picking up one also; "and what a frightful sum of money to throw away on things of this sort! What is this knife for?"

"That is the surgeon's *vade mecum*, his pocket companion; good for any thing, from taking a splinter out of his finger to lancing an abscess."

He took it from her as he spoke, and, drawing from his pocket-case a larger one cased in a leather sheath, compared the two, trying them alternately on the skin of his fore-finger.

"Don't do that!" she said; "you will draw blood, and I can't bear the sight of it."

He looked up, smiling, and put his left arm about her.

"Do you know how easily I could let out all the hot stream of yours? This is the place, where I feel your heart beating under my fingers. One little thrust, and the thing would be over before you knew it. Shall I?"

"Don't!" she said, drawing back a little from the curved blade which he laid playfully against her corsage. "I hate the thought of death; it makes me shudder. To lie in the ground and rot, and be crawled over by worms! Ugh!—Give me the old one, will you? You don't need two."

"Give it to you?" he said, lifting his eyebrows. "What on earth do you want of a lancet?"

"I haven't any."

"Of course you haven't. I'll buy you a penknife, if I can find one warranted not to cut any thing less resisting than these rosy nails. Don't you know that the gift of edged tools breaks friendship?"

"Yes; and I know you think children and fools should not be trusted with them," she answered tartly.

"It is very tiresome of you to be always saying no when I ask any thing in earnest."

"You did not ask that in earnest, surely. An instrument like that is too dangerous a weapon to be put in the hands of an inexperienced person, besides being too useful and too costly to convert into a plaything."

"How careful you are about money!" she said, curling her lip a little. "If you would help me try to get my own I should not be such a costly luxury as you seem to find me."

"Take care!" he answered, his eyes growing somber under their bent brows. "Don't remind me that there are more ways than one of breaking friendship."

CHAPTER III.

THE nameless but profound inductive philosopher who formulated the great general law, "women are chancy things," received one convinced adherent in Richard Norton before the brief period of his married life was over. Until it began he had entertained some theories on the sex in general which were, doubtless, sound enough in the main, but had the defect of being necessarily subject to revision under a special rule whose precise equivalent had been thus stated, not long before, by an eminent member of his own profession: "There are no diseases; there are only patients."

His convictions on the subject of marital supremacy and the proper means for attaining it owed a good deal more to the law of heredity, and a good deal less to memory, reflection, and deliberate volition, than he was inclined to suppose; and how they might have worked had the case before him been less complicated, and he had been called to treat questions of temperament and natural predisposition solely, is a matter which need not here be entered into. But in such an event, as he did not lack that essential fulcrum in all moral leverage which is furnished by a strong mutual attachment, the problem would at least have presented some element of uncertainty. As it was, it had none at all. The woman's past, and the future to which it was conducting, formed a net in which both were inextricably entangled, unless issue could be found by cutting its meshes.

She was one of the results of an ill-assorted union in which the woman, then well on toward the close of her third decade, had married a man several years her junior, against the warnings of her own better judgment and the advice of all her friends. His personal attractions and her own need of loving proved stronger in the end than either. She lived to see her worst forebodings realized where he was concerned, and to suffer more than she had ever dreamed of as possible through the children that she bore him. There were but two, a son and a daughter, separated by a long interval of years, but singularly alike in externals and other inherited characteristics. The father was weak rather than flagrantly vicious. He was a spendthrift who squandered all he was able of his wife's fortune, and a drunkard whose stupid excesses gradually wore out her affection; but he was nothing worse. His children, as they grew up, showed a like proneness to self-indulgence, but intensified by an obstinate strength of will which was their mother's, and which under the circumstances, was simply an added weakness. The poor woman tried her best to do her duty by them in the way to which her own childhood had been accustomed, but she could make little headway against the foolish lenience of their father. The boy broke openly through all restraints, and, being hampered by the want of money for his pleasures, took to evil ways, went rapidly from bad to worse and was sent into penal servitude not long after attaining the age of legal freedom. This blow completed for the father what his own excesses had already begun; and the mother, sick at heart, her pride suffering under a disgrace which none of her blood had known before, gathered together the meager remnants of what had once been wealth, and left her native land to seek shelter and forgetfulness among strangers.

Her daughter was then a mere child, but old enough to remember the manner of her former life and the petting, caressing ways of both her father and her

brother. Already, too, she gave promise of a beauty which, as she grew, attracted a sort of admiration which alarmed the mother. She repeated with her, as one consequence of this alarm, the same course of unintelligent, ill-advised harshness which had alienated her boy's affections; but it was because she knew no better way, and had, besides, some not unfounded reasons for attributing the bad results of it in the first case to her husband's interference. She had suffered greatly, but suffering had neither softened the natural acerbity of her disposition nor taught her the wisdom sometimes gained through sympathy. Her calvinistic creed, held lightly in her youth, became more real and more binding as the years went by, perhaps because it seemed to offer some explanation of her failures. She was less perplexed, if not more reconciled, when she reflected that the children who had cost her so many tears and seemingly unavailing prayers were by nature heirs of the devil, born in wrath and subject to iniquity, nay, might even have been preordained from all eternity to promote their Maker's glory as the instruments of her purification and their own damnation. It is an explanation in its way, and one which many an honest, wrong-headed soul has striven faithfully to live by, but it is one which sealed up for this woman the avenues of gentleness and sympathy, never open thoroughfares at best, through which alone she might have reached her child and molded her for the better.

Full as she was of evil tendencies, the girl was human, like the rest of us, and had at least the virtues as well as the defects of her qualities. There were not many of either sort, for she was drawn on very simple lines; yet every thing is good in its own nature, say common sense and St. Augustine, and becomes evil only by excess, perversion, or privation. Though incapable of lofty or of constant feeling, her passions had the one merit of reality, and swayed her as a reed *is swayed* by a strong wind. She became a facile liar

in the end, but she had no natural cunning. She sinned through one impulse and then covered her traces through another, simply because her pride was, on the whole, most vulnerable on the side of social shame, and her courage yielded to the smart which it inflicted. But she never became an adept in the art of falsifying, not being one of those congenital fabricators who embroider the humblest tissue of fact with arabesques of fiction for the mere artistic pleasure of the thing. She used a lie when she thought she could not attain her end without it, but it was a weapon which hurt her hand, and at which she was a bungler to the end.

To herself she never lied at all—a fact which admits of being judged of differently, according as one regards it from the intellectual or the moral point of view. From the liar's own standpoint it is decidedly disadvantageous, as it is not merely apt to rob him of that air of assured conviction which belongs to the other type, but exposes him to variations in his text, to faults of redundance or poverty of detail, and, in general, puts him at the mercy of his own memory as well as that of his victim.

Her motives in entering upon her present relations were, as usual, not very complex. She was still young, but she had by this time a thorough, and, for that very reason, a half-scornful, appreciation of the value of her beauty. Judging by its actual results thus far, she had concluded that it could be only one among several means of securing all she wanted. She was more intent than ever on getting what pleasure it contained from life; but events having pretty uniformly shown her that she had been purblind as well as eager in her pursuit of it, a certain worldly wisdom had come to her which did duty as substitute for conscience and the moral sense, and gave a veneer of decorum to a nature which at bottom was unaltered. She was still inwardly at war with the social principle, but she had decided to avoid, as far as she was able, all further struggle with social restrictions, and the

purpose of being a good wife according to her lights was one of those she had in mind in accepting Richard Norton. Though she had less reason for surprise, she was not less enraged than she avowed herself at the news she had received from Mr. Crawford at the moment of her departure from Hong Kong, and, as usual, her passion had rendered her short-sighted. Afterward, as the mists cleared away and the influence she was exerting on the young surgeon became evident, she resolved to profit by it to the utmost and not involve herself in a contest whose possible perils were brought vividly before her by his words. Mrs. Lawton had indeed returned her daughter's only letter indorsed in the manner she had described, but the name of Louis Giddings had also been written across its face. A mislaid or forgotten letter from him had been found by her among her daughter's papers after her departure, which had opened her eyes with a miserable completeness to the depths of the infamy to which the girl had descended. Torn with pity for both the men, full of disgusted anger at her daughter's conduct, and yet recoiling with invincible loathing from another public disgrace, the mother had ended by obeying neither of her conflicting impulses and remaining entirely passive. The only sign of active displeasure that she showed was the returned letter, which, falling first into the hands of Burton Lloyd, had nourished the suspicions which certain discrepancies in his wife's conduct had already kindled. They poisoned his existence for him, and made hers so intolerable that when he shot himself, after a scene of violent mutual recriminations, in which he accused her as the author of all his misfortunes, she felt nothing but relief.

She recalled all these things after having broached the matter of the will to Dr. Norton, and though she was right in supposing it improbable that her mother could have left any record which would expose her, yet she found she had the burned child's dread of pos-

sible fire. She would dare it if no other escape from poverty presented itself; but meanwhile another seemed opening at her hand. She was not long in doubt, nor long, either, in coming to a conclusion in which, though none but selfish motives entered, they took various shapes. She would marry her new lover and turn over a new leaf. He was young; he was intelligent and rich; he pleased her personally, moreover, even by the half-unconscious airs of mastery, which had for her the charm of masculinity without being in anywise akin to that load of suspicion under which she had groaned with Burton Lloyd. Best of all, they were absolutely new to each other. To begin life afresh with him would be almost a new birth, "a sleep and a forgetting," on her own part, to gain which she felt ready to submit to a good deal of fond restraint of the sort he seemed likely to prescribe. For once she might hope to reckon safely without her host, cut loose from Nemesis, and start untrammeled.

And then came her wedding-day, when a bomb exploded under her feet and tore away all her illusions. The name which had so long been the signal for her tortures to commence reappeared again, as if it had been written once for all in indelible characters upon the walls within which she had inclosed herself. Was she never to escape it? She grew sick of her life in those days, and sometimes felt tempted to throw up the burden of it altogether. She was irritable often, and peevish, and ill-tempered, when, out of sheer self-pity, she would have been glad to be gentle and caressing. She was nervous, even—a weakness to which her superb physique had thus far been a stranger. Her instinct told her that this time she faced a real danger. Norton once or twice caught her eyes fastened on him with an expression in which unmistakable personal fascination was blended with fear and entreaty in a way which set him musing.

"You make me feel like a snake-charmer," he said to her when he observed it for the second time. It

meant, perhaps, that she knew he would be merciless, but liked him none the less well for the knowledge.

One expedient after another to avoid or delay exposure suggested itself to her not very fertile mind, but the one which came oftenest, and seemed most likely to succeed if only it could be put in train, was that of seeing or otherwise opening communication with Louis Giddings before Norton should be able, and appealing to his generosity or his fears. But how to manage it? If that were tried and failed, then there remained flight, with its train of ignominy and open shame. Would not death be better than either? But she hated death with all the vigor of the healthy, unspiritualized human animal, to whom, if it mean nothing more than annihilation and corruption, it means all that is horrible in meaning those.

Things were in this thoroughly uncomfortable condition when the breaking-out of the Civil War, and Norton's invincible determination to go back to America and volunteer, opened for her a new region of conjecture. There were a thousand possibilities in war, both for him and for the other, who might, not improbably, be bitten by the same patriotic fury. They might never meet at all, if only they could be prevented from doing so at the outset. If she could but command for a little while her temper and her fears, and listen only to that one strong prompting which made her like to become in her husband's hands the pliant wax it pleased him best to find her, and to meet which he was himself most yielding, she might yet be able to provide for her own safety. Once or twice, even, when the domestic skies were at their serenest, the daring thought occurred to her of telling him the whole truth at once and accepting its full consequences at his hands. That, indeed, would have been the part of wisdom for her, but she could never quite resolve to take it.

Chance seemed to favor her at first on their arrival in New York, which they reached in the first days of

May. Every one who lived through that spring, and was old enough to be aware of its significance, must remember the bustle of warlike preparation going on all over the country, the militia regiments hurrying from the North to the defense of Washington, the forming and drilling of companies in every town and village, and the rage and surprise which were the dominant feelings in the breasts of all Unionists at the mode of forcing conclusions which had been precipitated by the South. But neither the temper nor the resources of either side were yet estimated at their just value, and there were not many at the North to whom the President's first call for volunteers did not appear amply sufficient for the work on hand. Such, at all events, was Dr. Norton's conviction, and his eagerness to enlist was in almost exact proportion to his belief that there was need for haste if one did not wish to see others carry off all the honors. If it were not entirely so, that was because he was a man whose conscience was more susceptible to the obligations imposed by voluntarily assumed engagements than to any others. He had a half-acknowledged feeling that his marriage had thus far proved a less satisfactory experiment than he had hoped, but the fact remained that he had a wife, and therefore duties toward her. He must establish her somewhere, and he admitted to himself that his father's house, where he would have preferred to leave her, might be a more uncomfortable residence than he could in fairness consign her to on the eve of a parting which might be final. Men had fallen on either side already, and he would have to take his chances like the rest. Pending a decision, however, he took her there, leaving New York for the purpose on the evening of the day they entered it. His arrival, and the events which almost immediately followed it, put a new face on things. His own desire had been to attach himself in his professional capacity to one of the newly-forming Massachusetts regiments, the acceptance of his resignation from the navy having reached him while in London. But the

painful joy with which his parents greeted him, the exalted, semi-religious fury with which they rejoiced in the war as the scourge which was at once to annihilate slavery and punish those who had winked at its continuance, their willingness to see him depart and bid him God-speed, which asked no sacrifice at his hands but that spending with them what little time might yet be possible, altered his purpose. His own ardor sprang from no such considerations as these. His zeal was for the Union solely, and yet it pleased him to see the old folks base theirs on still more ideal grounds. He concluded to enlist where he was, and return to Boston only when all was over. But before he could take even the first step toward carrying out this plan his father, enfeebled by age and the stress of conflicting emotions, fell seriously ill, and Richard's experienced eye recognized in the attack some grave but not necessarily fatal complications. The utmost care, the most watchful nursing, were imperatively necessary, and the son at once dismissed all other thoughts and devoted himself entirely to the bedside. May was ended and June near its ides before he could pronounce all danger over. And then, as his parents would not entertain the idea of removal while the future was so unsettled, and his wife was plainly out of her element with them, he yielded to her desire to go back to her old home, where she declared that she still had many friends, until he should call her to join him. He accompanied her to Montreal, settled her in a quiet hotel, and started to go back home and carry out his previously-formed purpose. A copy of the New York *Herald* which he bought in the train diverted him from his purpose. It contained a list of Massachusetts regiments about starting for the seat of war, with the names of officers appended. They were to leave Boston the following night, and Louis Giddings was a captain of volunteers. There came over him that yearning for one of the old, familiar talks which men experience who have known real friendship, and he changed his destination.

CHAPTER IV.

IT was late in the afternoon when Dr. Norton reached Boston, and, being tired, hot and dusty from the train, he went into a hotel near the station to refresh himself with a bath and dinner. A party of men in blue came in and established themselves near him when his meal was nearly over. He was dividing his attention between a dish of strawberries and an evening paper, and paid no heed to the new-comers until one of them approached, and, touching him on the shoulder, saluted him by name.

"You here, Norton, and in this rig, when all the rest of us are putting on regimentals? I thought you were in the navy, or the antipodes, or both?"

The speaker was a tall, fair haired young fellow of seven or eight and twenty, who had recently abandoned his desk in the paternal banking-house for a place in the volunteer ranks.

"So I was until last January," said the doctor, rising to shake hands. He glanced as he did so at a mirror close by, in which were reflected at full length his own London-made suit of gray tweed and Mason's well-fitting uniform. "It does look suspiciously unpatriotic under the circumstances, but I am on my way home to exchange it for something of this sort," laying his hand on the other's sleeve. "The regimental tailors seem to have done their full duty by you."

"Bother the regimental tailors!" said Mason, looking at himself in the glass with an amusing and amused complacence. "I went to my own man and ordered my toggery myself. Nice, isn't it? I haven't felt so well dressed since I was a shaver and wore a coat made out of my mother's red flannel petticoat on

Fourth of July and general training-day. Why do you go home? Why not come along with us?"

"So I would if my parents did not regard me so much in the light of an Isaac whom they are about to lay on the altar. I wanted to start from here, but it seemed a little rough, after having been away so long already, not to give the last days to my father and mother. I have been at home for the last six weeks, though, and begin to find my resolution getting shaky again."

"Better come along with us. Withrow is our regimental surgeon, but he thinks there is going to be some tall fighting this summer, and would be glad of more assistants. Come over to the other table, where the rest of the fellows are. You know most of them, I fancy. At all events, you must remember my old crony, Levi Cohen, who went off to Leipzig half a dozen years ago to study music. He came back last fall and has been all the fashion, but he dropped his fiddle and the symphony he was writing, and is a high private in the —th like myself."

"The —th is Louis Giddings's regiment, isn't it?"

"Yes; he is captain of our company."

"I want to see him to-night, if possible. I am just through my dinner, and I thought now would be as likely an hour as any to find him at home."

"No," said Mason, looking at his watch; "he is living on the other side of town, and would be leaving for the armory by the time you could get there. Go up along with us and you will be sure of him. We get off at this hour to-morrow, and to-night is the last general rendezvous before starting. We have had some West-Pointers to drill us, and they say we do them credit."

As he finished speaking they turned toward the other table, where Norton recognized several acquaintances. They were nearly all young, unmarried men, one a mere boy of eighteen or twenty, and, though an occasional speech reflected what might be taken as the

anxiety of mothers or sweethearts, none of them appeared to entertain any serious forebodings. Soldiering was simply a new experience, war a sport which would vary agreeably the usual monotony of business or professional life. Possibly some of this lightness of heart was assumed to cover deeper feelings, but most of it came from sheer want of reflection and love of novelty. When the thinning-out of the gay ranks set in, men's moods took on a soberer hue. Little Levi Cohen, beside whom Norton walked to the armory after dinner, and who was gushing, as usual, in the way which made intimates of his own sex regard him very much as they would have done a nice girl, came back from Big Bethel before the summer was over with a wound which dashed forever his ambition as a virtuoso of the violin; and Mason, who was on his other hand, never returned at all. But no shadow of coming events colored their thoughts at present.

Louis Giddings, with whom his friend was not even able to exchange salutations before the business of the evening began, was apparently in a graver frame of mind. His face, the doctor thought, as he had now and then a chance to observe it closely, looked at once serene and serious. He fancied he would have divined his motive for enlisting, even unaided by a chance word or two which Mason dropped concerning him.

"He did not like the notion of being our captain," the young fellow said in speaking of the way in which his company had been formed, "but he found there was no way to resist manifest destiny. We all wanted him and no one else, and he had to give in. There seemed to be a general feeling that when so many of us are going in just for a lark, a man who would keep out of it altogether if he could—I mean, if he did not look at it so seriously, as a sort of duty a fellow owes his country and so on—is the best one to take the lead. I don't think he has tried to enlist a soul, but he was on hand himself from the word go."

"*He is* a tremendously good fellow," chimed in

Cohen. "I never knew him until lately, but he makes me think of the middle ages and all that sort of thing. You know what I mean—when people took themselves and every thing else in dead earnest and weren't ashamed of it."

"There was always something of that about him," said Norton, "but I don't recall it as the first thing to strike one. It may have been the secret, though, of the curious attraction he had for so many of us."

"Yes," said Mason, "you could always get down to bed-rock with him, if you had an inclination that way; but, if he liked you at all, his angles did not protrude too abruptly. I think both peculiarities are a little more accentuated than they used to be."

"Is he on the *Chronicle* still?"

"No; he dropped journalism after he returned from abroad, and began to practice at the bar. He has done famously, too. He earned a reputation that would do credit to an old lawyer by a speech he made in a case he conducted last winter. It seems half a pity to run the risk of wasting him in a scuffle like this. He stands as good a chance of being picked off by an unlucky bullet as any of us, and there can't be many men of his age who would not be less of a public loss than he."

A couple of the party, who had been walking somewhat in advance, happened to be stopped on a curbstone by a heavily laden cart which took some time in passing, and Mason's last remark caught the ear of one of them.

"You are speaking of Giddings?" he asked, half over his shoulder, and addressing Dr. Norton. "That is a piece of Mason's hyperbole which needs to be discounted heavily. Giddings is simply a case of personal magnetism, as little to be accounted for on any rational basis as the question of why one woman attracts you rather than another, or why a particular strain of music takes your ear. As to ascribing him all sorts of supereminent qualities, it is unmixed non-

sense. What man of sound judgment, beginning his career here, of all places in the world, would have handicapped himself, as he has done, by entering the Catholic Church?"

"There is something in that," said Mason, "but I doubt if it amounts to much, after all. I look on that particular whim as one phase of a many-sided nature, which will pass in due season; and meantime, when a man of his caliber tells me he has looked thoroughly into a matter which I have not paid the least attention to, my native modesty, which must have struck you often as excessive, hints to me that I am not called upon to judge and condemn him out of hand."

"Wilson is an infernal idiot!" he went on when the others were well in advance again. "It did me good to give him that little dig. He pleaded on the other side in the case I was speaking of just now, and made a stupid blunder which threw it bodily into Giddings' hands. He went as far as he dared, afterward, toward insinuating personal prepossession in Judge Winthrop, before whom it was argued, and further than he will care to go again in a hurry toward getting into hot water for it."

They had reached the armory by this time, and further conversation was suspended.

The tone in which Captain Wilson had spoken was specially offensive to Dr. Norton, whose old affection for his friend time and absence had done nothing to diminish; but his judgment on the fact with which it acquainted him was not unlike that of the speaker. He had himself been making steady progress toward a conviction diametrically opposed to that which Giddings had embraced. He was not a vulgar atheist, flaunting his opinions in an obtrusive manner, having, indeed, some strong views as to what good taste requires in that regard. But he had reasoned his way to them in a manner and with a deliberation which satisfied him that they were sound, and to learn that the man whom he respected and liked above all

others had gone over to what he esteemed the party of retrogression and superstition gave him a sufficiently unpleasant revulsion of feeling. That passed, however, the instant he saw his friend again, and in the interval that elapsed before they could address each other he had accounted for the fact in a way he found satisfactory.

"It is Kitty's work, of course," he said to himself, smiling at some of his recollections of the pair. "She must have taken the plunge she has been threatening for years, and he lends himself to it to give her pleasure. They will both come back to dry land again the wiser for their wetting. A man will go a long way for the woman he loves, but that would be a hair's-breadth too far for me."

His thoughts thereupon reverted to his own wife, whom he had left that morning in a grief as unaffected, and as temporary, as her other passions. Distance renewed that glamour of enchantment which he sometimes fancied her continual presence had a tendency to lessen. It had been her fortune always to conjure up phantom possibilities which never took on reality, to suggest to the imagination more than she was able to render to the heart. Norton's experience with her was by no means unique, but that was a fact which he could not be aware of. He knew only that although he had won her so recently he had not suffered overmuch in leaving her, and regretted it now for both their sakes, accusing himself of insensibility and not her, as he had sometimes inwardly done when near her—of failing in some essential quality which he could not define, but whose lack he felt.

He had not sought Louis Giddings with any special intention of speaking of her, but now that he was near him he found himself speculating more than he had done of late on the nature of their early relations to each other. As he knew her better he had ceased to believe that she could have been the cause of the lasting trouble which had marred so many years of his

friend's life. He had never had more tangible grounds for supposing that she had been so than his recollection of the effect he produced when he delivered Crawford's message some five years before, and the sickening apprehension which had blended with and tarnished the expected joy of his own marriage day. No suspicion of the actual truth had ever crossed his mind, and his wife's ready explanations banished those that threatened to take root there. Now, as the haunting recollection persisted in recurring, there came with it the memory of the scene which had half-unmanned him when he left her, and it seemed to him that both of them had been defrauded in that it had not done so altogether.

"Poor girl!" he thought, "the fire that is in her would melt any thing but a stone. And yet I took myself for something softer than that, too. She may have hit him hard, as she says. I suspect she would have done the same by me if—"

He stopped short there, and promised himself to write her a letter before he slept.

He found, however, when at last the men who left the armory with them dropped off and their talk became more personal, that he had an odd reluctance to introduce the subject of his marriage, even when it would have been naturally led up to by his friend's reference to Katharine and the baby-boy from whom he was about to part. He was going to pass the night at their house, and the thought crossed him that there would be plenty of time to tell the news, if he did not decide in the end to withhold it altogether for the present. They had reached home, in fact, and Mrs. Giddings had come down and spent half an hour or so in chatting with them, and then Louis and she had gone up into the nursery to pay the customary visit, which they excused themselves for not omitting on the ground that it would be the last for a time indefinite, before the full absurdity of his delay dawned upon him and made him resolve to end it.

They had been sitting in the library around a table on which there stood a drop-light covered with a pale-tinted porcelain shade. Books and papers were scattered about, and a desk which stood open reminded him to ask for writing materials before he was left alone. But he did not begin his projected letter at once. The atmosphere of contented, peaceful domesticity which surrounded him recalled some of his own early dreams of what home life should be, and again he found himself growing sentimental and self-reproachful. He drew from his breast-pocket a case containing a miniature of his wife which he had had painted while in London. He had seldom looked at it since, partly because this was their first separation, and partly because the picture, though an admirable likeness, had never pleased him. The painter was a man celebrated among his brethren of the craft for the skill with which he caught the more subtle characteristics of his sitters; and though Norton, not knowing this, had selected him almost at hazard, he had been struck by the way in which the miniature had renewed his own earliest impression of the face it reproduced. As he reopened it now the same experience was repeated, and he laid it down beside the desk with an impatient shrug, and shut his eyes a moment to recall more vividly the more agreeable mental image of her as he saw her last.

He had dated his letter and written a line or two when Louis Giddings re-entered.

"Don't let me disturb you," the latter said, throwing himself down on a lounge at the opposite side of the table. "Finish your writing and then tell me how the world has been going with you since we parted."

Dr. Norton pushed away his paper.

"My letter can wait," he said; "at best it can't be sent before to-morrow, and I don't feel quite up to writing it just now."

"You don't distinguish yourself as a correspond-

ent," remarked Giddings. "The last letter I had from you was posted at Yokohama upward of two years ago. It reached me in Rome, and I answered it from there. What have you been doing since?"

"Studying the yellow races in the treaty ports for the most part. There must be something beastly bad about our postal service. Do you mean to say that a letter I sent you from Shanghai last December never came to hand?"

"I never saw it. Were you stationed long at Shanghai?"

"Off and on about six months in all. I forwarded my resignation from there."

"You went ashore often, of course," said Giddings, rising on his elbow. "I wonder if you ever ran across an old friend of mine who says he must have gone there for his sins."

"Crawford? I owe him the least tedious hours I spent in the city; and if I had listened to him and half a dozen other Englishmen, I should have settled down to make my fortune, as they are doing. I concluded that I would rather do without one than get it by wasting my best years in China."

"He is well and prosperous, I suppose?"

"Yes, but heartily tired and bound to leave as soon as he thinks he can afford it. We talked about you tolerably often."

"He sent me no message?"

"The usual ones, of course."

Both men dropped into a silence which Dr. Norton was the first to break.

"I met another friend of yours on shipboard as I was on my way home from Hong Kong. Crawford, who came on as far as that from Shanghai, partly on business and partly to see me off, introduced us just as the boat was leaving."

"Who was that?"

"Mrs. Burton Lloyd."

Giddings looked blank and unresponsive. Evidently the name had no associations for him.

"I don't remember Mrs. Burton Lloyd."

Dr. Norton laid his hand on the miniature-case with a gesture unobserved by Giddings, who was nearly flat on his back, with his hands clasped under his head. Apparently Norton had been about to pass it silently across the table, but thought better of it.

"She is hardly the sort of woman whom one forgets, either," he said, retaining the picture beneath his palm.

"Possibly you misunderstood Crawford. She may be a friend of his, but I am quite sure that I never heard of her before."

"I did not learn the fact from Crawford, but from herself. I have a likeness here which I don't think much of, but which will probably recall her to your memory."

Then, as the other half rose again and put out his hand to take it, he added, "I thought you might have known her by that name. She was a Miss Lawton before her marriage."

Louis Giddings fell back on the lounge, the hand he had extended striking the edge of the table heavily as he did so, as if the life had suddenly gone out of it.

Emotion of some sort Norton had felt certain of producing, and had ascribed his own curious reluctance to bring the subject forward to that expectation. But up to this moment he had persisted in assuring himself that he anticipated nothing greater or other than such a natural surprise as he had observed in Crawford at the moment of his meeting Mrs. Lloyd—the sort of feeling with which any one might learn of the continued existence of a person long accounted dead. Under different circumstances there might possibly have been something more than this expected where Giddings was concerned, but it could not be supposed that a man who had been and still evidently was so much in love with his wife would be seriously affected

by any tidings which recalled an outlived attachment. But it was not surprise which was most visible in Giddings's face, though that had also flashed across it. He looked, Dr. Norton thought with a quick professional instinct, as though he might be on the point of death from heart disease. His professional instinct went no further—he felt unable either to offer him assistance or to speak. For the horror, the spiritual recoil and loathing, which made themselves felt as the chief elements of the silent agony he witnessed, struck to his own heart a conviction of his wife's worthlessness which refused to admit itself as sudden. He seemed to have known from the first instant of their acquaintance what as yet he could not strictly be said to know at all. He ground his teeth and cursed his own folly inwardly before it occurred to him to ask a question. He felt, as he said long afterward, as if the bottom had dropped out of the universe, and he were hanging from nothing above a void.

It was Louis Giddings who recovered himself first. He rose to a sitting posture after a long silence, during which neither had many thoughts to spare for the other. His face had lost its grayish pallor and looked composed, though still somewhat rigid. He took up the picture, which Norton had dropped in the middle of the table, and gave it a hasty glance. Norton looked up, and their eyes met.

"I know her," Giddings said in a low voice. "Why do you carry her picture?"

"She is my wife."

The words, and the look on his face as he uttered them, reminded Giddings of a child who expects a heavy blow and instinctively puts up his arm to ward it off. Norton was literally cowering under the dread of what might be coming. The other paused almost imperceptibly. His eyebrows rose a little, and then the ghost of a smile flickered about his mouth.

"Hardly, Dick! I am sorry to rob you of that treasure, but I must. She is my wife."

"Good God! And Kitty?"

"Don't!" said Giddings, wincing like one who has been touched upon an open wound.

After a while the broken thread of talk was taken up again, and again it was Louis Giddings who resumed it.

"I don't see my way through this at all," he began. "Of course, before offering myself to Katharine, I took every means in my power to verify the message you may remember bringing me from Crawford some years ago. He wrote me that he got the information from her mother—and, short of a burial certificate, which was unattainable, I thought no evidence could be more satisfactory than that. He did not tell you who she was?"

"No; I noticed that he was overwhelmed with surprise at seeing her."

"And when did you learn her identity and her knowledge of me?"

"Five minutes after our marriage, when she signed her name in the register. I was idiot enough to make no inquiries which would have led up to it beforehand, but what I heard of her before we started, and the fact of Crawford's consigning her to my care in the quality of a friend of his, seemed enough at the time—at least in addition to such information as she was good enough to volunteer. Possibly I should have been sufficiently idiotic to go on even had I done so. I knew nothing of her, you may remember, except that I thought you seemed rather moved when I notified you of her death. I must have mentally identified her as the cause of some serious trouble to you, but I was not likely to hit on this one."

"It was a hideous thing to own to, but I have not waited until now to be sorry that I kept it secret. She must have spread the report of her death, I suppose. I always thought that would be a part of her scheme."

"It was a bad move on her part if she made it, since

it appears to have cost her a fortune. That is her tale, at least, and her regret was so genuine that I never had any misgivings on that score. God knows," he went on, with a sort of suppressed rage, "that I had plenty of another sort from the moment I laid eyes on her accursed face, but I might have had the same if I had watched her from her cradle. What motive could she have had to abuse her mother's mind to that extent?"

"Two at least. She might naturally suppose that it would come to me in course of time through that channel, and dam up one very obvious source of danger. She would also be likely to desire that all home communications should be broken off out of a pious regard for the peace of mind of the other man whom she swindled into marriage."

"He did not know of your existence, then?"

"Probably not—certainly not in the capacity of a legally-married husband. Oh!" he went on, answering the question in Norton's eyes, "she is an artist in her way, and immensely careful about her stage properties. A scandal, or an elopement, or even the absence of a decent bandage over the eyes of the special dupe she has on hand, would gall her pride, which is more difficult than her virtue. For that reason I have sometimes doubted whether I might not honestly have dispensed myself from believing any of her statements for which I had not independent evidence. But your experience of her must be very unlike mine if you have not sometimes run against a hard edge of truth in her and recognized it, if only by the ugly wound it made. I certainly married her, and have never seen good reason to doubt that I had the honor of precedence in that line. She left me under that impression when her desire for safety as well as her personal pride would naturally have counseled an explicit statement to the contrary."

"I don't understand."

Giddings went into a succinct account of the cir-

cumstances attendant on his marriage and the confession volunteered him afterward.

"She blundered stupidly," he ended, "in writing me at all. It would have been so much easier and safer to have decamped without a word that I found myself obliged to accept her self-accusation as genuine."

The two men looked at each other silently a moment, and then Norton put out his hand.

"I had been envying you, rather," he said, with a sickly effort at a smile, "but I see the sting she gave me was not quite unique. You have felt that venom, too."

"God curse her!" he broke out a minute later. "What difference can it make to you at all? If she turned the iron in you, that is over and done with long ago. You have known since what it is to love a pure woman and be sure of her. I can drop her into the place where she belongs, but I can't drop the hideous recollection with her."

"It will pass," said Giddings. There was a light in his eyes and a smile about his lips which made the other groan. "I don't presume to offer you any consolation. I know what you suffer, having been through it. I think myself that I am in a rather better plight than you, even though the sole redeeming feature in your case is the deadly one in mine. Some goods no fate can rob us of."

He rose as he spoke, and stood with his back against the chimney-piece, looking down upon his friend. In another instant Norton also rose.

"Don't let us be fools," he said; "there is something more practical to be done than talk. You are obliged to start to-morrow night, of course. My own departure I must put off until later. I take it for granted you will not tell Kitty for the present—I don't see any reason why she should ever be told at all. I will go with you to-morrow to put things in train to relieve you of the load I have saddled on you."

"To take the preliminary steps for a divorce, you mean?"

"Assuredly. The chances of war may carry you off, and there are some things which must not be left to chance. You have Kitty's future and that of your child to safeguard."

"That is easily arranged. I shall make some verbal alterations in my will to-night. Beyond that there is not much that I can do."

"You mean that you will defer it until after your return? For how long have you enlisted?"

"For the war."

"Don't put it off, then; the risks for Kitty are too great. Our joint testimony to the facts will be data enough to begin on, and additional affidavits must be easily procurable from Hong Kong. Montreal will be the proper field of operations, I suppose. She is there at present, and is a British subject."

"Do you want to take criminal proceedings against her? I am at your service in that case, either as witness or as prosecutor."

"Certainly not; what have I to do with her except to cut her off as a poisonous excrescence? I should have thought my meaning must be obvious enough. I don't understand why you did not seek a divorce years ago. She was not so utterly out of reach that you could not have proceeded against her by making the necessary inquiries at the time."

"Years ago I thought it a filthy mess, and had the same disgust at owning to have been in it which you experience now! At present it is impossible for another reason. Neither Katharine nor I can entertain the idea of profiting by a divorce. We knew already that our parting to-morrow night might be final—we shall know now that it must be."

"You will have the cruelty to tell her?"

"How can I avoid it? Suppose me to be shot in the first battle—can I leave her with the possibility that she may learn the fact and my present knowledge

of it when I am not at hand to soften the blow as far as may be?"

Dr. Norton reflected for a moment.

"Yes," he said, "I see the necessity. What I don't understand is your reluctance to take at once the obvious steps to free yourself. It must come to that in the end, and if begun at once, and carried on in Canada with all possible precautions against unnecessary publicity, it might perhaps be accomplished before you return, and no awkward questions ever arise as to the cause of your absence."

"It can not be accomplished at all. Has no one told you that we are both Catholics?"

"What has that to do with it?"

"Every thing. Divorce, with freedom to remarry, is forbidden by the divine law, which we accept as binding on our consciences."

"Divine law? Is that a euphemism for ecclesiastical tyranny?"

Giddings colored painfully, and for a moment made no answer. When he did speak it was in a voice somewhat constrained.

"If you see fit to put it that way. It does not occur to me to do so. The fact, in so far as she and I are affected by it, remains the same under whatever name is given it."

"You mean to say that you will let this harlot come between you and the woman you love, that you will let her rob your child of a name, and for a whim, an outworn, obsolete folly such as that? God! I did not believe any sane man could sink his intelligence to quite that level—least of all you!"

"See here, Dick," said Giddings, putting his hands on his friend's shoulders, "I understand your feeling, and am at no sort of loss to comprehend your thoughts. We know each other well enough to speak plain truths and listen to them. Take this one for granted. Men play at belief sometimes, but when it comes to the test *no man tears the* very heart out of his body for a whim.

If I sacrifice myself and her I do it with my eyes open, counting the whole cost, and feeling to its last pang the full bitterness of it to us both. But I know her through and through, God bless her! and I will not belie either of us by pretending to find room for hesitation concerning our mutual duty. To part now is possible, but only because neither she nor I could endure the thought of parting for eternity."

Again they looked silently into each other's eyes for some brief space.

"I have seen the same phenomenon before," Dr. Norton said at last, "but never under the same conditions or in the same degree. Finding it in you I must needs respect it, but I neither sympathize with nor share it. The most obvious thing to say about it is that it is going to make my own course a little more difficult than I hoped it would be."

They parted for the night a few minutes later, each feeling in his own way the need of solitude, and the heavy strain of what had passed.

CHAPTER V.

RICHARD NORTON, coming down rather late the next morning, found that his hosts had just preceded him into the breakfast-room. He had passed a wretched night, during whose first hours sleep had been impossible in spite of physical fatigue. It was only as dawn began to announce itself on the edge of the horizon that drowsiness at last overtook him and offered a brief respite from his miserable thoughts. As he dressed himself the traces they had left behind in haggard eyes and newly-furrowed lines were plainly visible. It seemed even to him, always less observant of himself than of his neighbors, that he had aged perceptibly within twelve hours.

Louis Giddings, too, was very pale, but seemed otherwise unaltered. His glance followed Katharine, and lingered on her when her own was turned away, but Norton was perplexed by its expression. He felt unable to determine from it whether his resolution of the night before had been reconsidered, fulfilled, or was simply waiting for its time to come.

His study of Katharine was more satisfactory, for it convinced him that she was still in blissful ignorance. She looked very young and very innocent, he thought —not much older than she had done on the day, which came back involuntarily to his memory, on which he had first mentioned to her the name of the man who sat opposite her now, and of whose child she was the mother. He was not certain that she did not look younger still, since the eyes which smiled serenely at him had lost that wistful, searching, and yet baffled look which used sometimes to give her the appearance

of premature and melancholy age. She could hardly be more than twenty-two now, he reflected—her life was all before her yet. It would be a too atrocious cruelty to plunge her also into the gulf, the only innocent victim except her child—innocent even of the folly which was, after all, the heaviest accusation that either he or Giddings could justly lay to their own charge. Serene and peaceful as she seemed, it was still evident that the grief of the approaching separation was constantly present to her mind. She had plainly done nothing more than acquiesce passively in her husband's verdict as to his duty to his country, and would have been overjoyed had his conscience permitted him to take another view. Such, at least, was Dr. Norton's conviction as to her mental attitude, though nothing in her actual speech lent it any special weight.

Presently she rose to leave the table, making as she did so some playful reference to her baby, which had not yet been put on exhibition, and promising to bring him down when his morning toilet should be made.

"You have not told her?" Norton asked when she had gone up-stairs.

"I have had no opportunity. We were out together before breakfast, but the street is hardly the place one chooses for a communication of that sort. It can not be delayed much longer, but I dread it." He sighed heavily as he stopped speaking.

"Be advised, and delay it altogether."

Giddings shook his head, but said nothing.

"Delay it, at least, until I can make some further effort to untangle what seems to me a very lame and crooked story. I have been lying awake all night over it."

"I have been through that mill before you. What can have occurred to you, do you suppose, with which *I* have not tried to cheat myself a thousand times *already?* You think there is no certainty that I did

not occupy relatively to Lloyd the position I suppose you to occupy toward me."

"Why not?"

"Because the absence of all vestige of a motive forbids the supposition. What woman would blacken herself in such an unnecessary and hopeless fashion unless the tale were true? It seems to me that the fact of her having done so is the very best thing I know about her. To tell the truth," he said, flushing a little, "I always felt sure she had for me the feeling that passes with her for love, and wanted to make things as easy as she could for me by showing me how little I had lost."

Norton ground his teeth and muttered an execration.

"It never occurred to you, then, that she might have read you well enough to foresee that the more horrible the filth she plunged you into the less likely you would be to call attention to it? Yet that is precisely what happened."

Giddings paused, apparently to turn over the suggestion in his mind. It was evidently a new one to him.

"How long have you known her?" he said at last.

"About five months, during which I have been with her almost daily."

"You have had a better chance than I to judge her. Our whole acquaintance did not cover much more than half that period. Has she struck you as sufficiently subtle to hit upon such a scheme?"

Norton made no immediate answer, and presently Giddings went on again:

"It is plain she has not. She is bad enough as it is, but that would argue a malignity, a cold-blooded calculation and ingenuity, which I don't believe in as a part of her temperament. It is useless for you to try to assume my burden, old fellow. It is very good of you, but it can't be done."

"I *did not* offer that as any thing more than a sug-

gestion, though I believe it a plausible one. As to subtlety, a chance inspiration sometimes does duty for it with the dullest people I have ever met. I noticed last night that you said she left you under the impression that she was your wife. Did she positively say so?"

"If she had taken that pains I fancy I should have felt less confident about the fact than I do. She did what was tantamount to it in assuring me that I was free to act as though she were dead. What precise evidential value would you feel inclined to attach to any statement she might make where her interests or her safety are concerned?"

"That is neither here nor there. What I want to get at is this: You seem to think that she was fond of you and afraid of Lloyd. If your first supposition is correct, why should she have left you? Unless Lloyd were her husband, what special grounds for fear could she have had where he was concerned? To me she always declared that she tolerated him at first and detested him afterward."

Giddings smiled. "What else did she tell you? Lloyd is an unknown quantity to both of us. I think it likely that her fear of him was a much more insignificant factor in her motive than her desire for the money and position he could give her. She said so plainly, and I think she told the truth. I was nothing but a boy, not out of college yet, and with my career to make unaided. If she had not been in absolute need of a husband at the time I fell in her way, I am persuaded I should never have been in just the box I am. I was infatuated with her, I don't deny, and thought I wanted to marry her; but, left to my own devices, I would have waited until I was in better shape to do it. Lloyd's claims, whatever they were, she would probably have found means to dispose of had she seen sufficient reason for so doing. And as to *your* first difficulty—" He stopped and shrugged his shoulders. "Cæsar or Antony, what great difference

do you think it makes to creatures of that sort which one of us it is? What they seek is their own pleasure, and all they dread is open shame. They are ready to throw themselves at the head of Octavius into the bargain, if only he will excuse them from his triumph."

He pulled out his watch and regarded it with a sigh.

"Do you see the hour?" he asked. "And besides the one thing I have to do, there are a dozen others which must be seen to before starting."

"Make me your deputy wherever you find it possible. I can't stand coming back here under the circumstances, but I will be at the station to see you off, and shall take the night train north afterward. Meanwhile there are some few details which I must ask you to give me in writing."

"Be warned!" Giddings urged as they clasped hands in parting some minutes later. "Don't risk an interview with her at present. You will gain nothing which can not be secured some other way, and may lose what you will regret hereafter."

"You think it might be the part of wisdom to adopt your old plan of quiescence?" Norton answered, a note of bitterness in his voice which had not until now been audible. "There are some tempting things about it, I can't deny, but unfortunately I am not able to divest myself of certain old prejudices which regard the welfare of my neighbor."

Giddings reddened even to the roots of his hair.

"I deserve that—above all from you. For God's sake, don't give me reason to regret it more bitterly than I do already!"

Dr. Norton looked him rather curiously in the eyes.

"Of what do you think me capable?" he asked. "I was not cast in the same mold as you."

CHAPTER VI.

LOUIS GIDDINGS went slowly up the stairs after his friend's departure, and entered a private sitting-room, beyond which lay the nursery. The door between the two was slightly ajar, and he could see the crucifix hanging on the wall and hear the splashing of water, the crowing of baby in his bath, the voices of Katharine and the nurse, and the childish laughter of Lily Kitchener, who had begun to divide her allegiance between the father and the son, and was the latter's most devoted subject. At any other time he would himself have passed on into the further room, as Katharine doubtless anticipated now ; for though she heard his step she neither spoke nor rose to go and meet him. But to-day the familiar scene was more than he could bear. He stood a moment near an open window, and then dropped into an easy-chair beside the table and buried his face on his folded arms. The night had been a bitter one, and the thought of what yet lay before him taxed his strength almost beyond endurance.

Katharine, approaching the open door a moment later and seeing his unusual attitude, shut it behind her, and, coming close, kneeled down beside him. She slipped her arm beneath his, and kissed the hand which was nearest her and then the cheek against which she nestled her own. He neither moved nor spoke, and presently she began half-whispering in his ear.

"It is hard, Louis, but I think God will be good to us. It will not be for very long."

"No," he answered, with a sigh that was almost a groan; "at worst life is not endless."

"We did well to ask for fortitude this morning," she went on after a little, seeing that she had failed to rouse him from his despondent mood; "but why did you tell me to beg the fear of the Lord as well?"

He turned at that and took her in his arms. "I did you an injustice, dear. It has penetrated all your bones, and I know it."

Then for a while they looked into each other's eyes without more words; a vague dread slowly rising in hers to meet the anguish and tenderness and exceeding pity that were in his.

"You staid up too late with Richard," she said at last, trying to shake off her new anxiety, yet going straight to its occasion by an unerring instinct. "I was glad to see him, but I wish he had not come now."

But he could not force himself to take the opening she gave him.

"Do you remember, love," he said, closing her eyes with a kiss, "the day we saw each other first? Such a little time to count up by years, and yet it seems to stretch back into eternity and go forward to it. Do you know what you have been to me since then?"

"Yes," she whispered, "for I know what you have been to me."

"The life of my life," he went on, "the heart of my heart, even before you became all to me that you are now. If we were to be torn utterly apart it seems to me that my soul, too, would languish and die within me. Come what may, that can never be, I think?"

"No," she answered softly; "could we let each other go even for a little, if we did not know that for us there is no such thing as parting? As it is I can hardly bear it. What shall I do without you? When I know you are in danger I shall die daily."

"And yet death would be so easy, and I am so great a coward that I am tempted to pray for it on the first

battle-field. Don't look at me like that! You unman me, and I need all my courage."

Presently he began again, seeing that she kept silence.

"Think how much I need it when I say that, seeing what lies before us, I could find it in my heart to be sorry that we ever met or loved each other. Do you know what I have done to you, poor motherless little mother, whom I must leave to bear her burdens and her sorrows all alone?"

She burst out then, speaking with a quick, vehement passion, and drawing back from his encircling arms.

"Yes," she cried, "you made life sweet to me and holy! You opened the way to God for me! You gave me your child! You have given me infinite happiness and but one single pain, and that you give me now when for any reason you can say you regret that it has ever been! What have I done to deserve a stab like that?"

"Good God!" he said, "I don't regret it—not one hour of it, not one minute! I can give you up, and know you suffer, and live to feel the sharpest sting of every pain that you will have to bear, but I can't be sorry that you have been mine! I shall rejoice in it till the day I die."

Then he told her. The blood surged up to her temples as she began to comprehend, and then sank back again. He saw the life going out in her eyes and on her lips; she grew cold, and for the first and last time she fainted outright and lay in his arms like one dead. He rose and laid her down upon a sofa, and for a little while made no effort to revive her. The thrust of a pain which was half-pleasure smote him.

"My God!" he said beneath his breath, "how sweet it would be to kill her with a blow like that, and die myself in giving it!"

Once afterward in the course of the interrupted day, broken by the pressure of so many imperative

duties, he told her that for months he had been dimly conscious that some heavy grief awaited them.

"Not this one," he said. "As God sees me, the possibility of it has never once crossed my mind in all these years. What I feared I did not know, but the dread followed me like my shadow. That is what lay at the bottom of my enlistment. There were other reasons, sound enough, plausible enough, to offer even to you, and yet I have wondered many times how you could accept them as sufficient. Did you think me made of stone that I could leave you, suffering still from your mother's death, with the child still hanging at your breast, to assume a duty not absolutely laid upon me? I must have been trying, with a vain instinct, to avert one evil by going to seek another."

"It is better as it is," she said, lifting her sad eyes to his. "I can be more reconciled to lose you this way. The other cut me deeper than I could ever bear to show you. I am glad you thought to tell me that."

He made a movement as if to take her in his arms, but stopped again, looking at her in silence.

"Good God!" he groaned, "how close you are, and yet how far away!"

"We never can be far away from each other now," she answered. "Don't you feel how this blow which has sundered us outwardly has welded our souls together once for all? It seems to me that I have passed out of myself and become you."

"You are an angel," he said. "The dross is burned clean out of you, but the leaven of humanity works still in me."

The baby was sleeping in its mother's arms, and he took up the little hand which lay, relaxed and with limp fingers, at its side.

"See here," he said, "one chief ingredient in my bitterness. What will you tell him on the day when he asks why he has no father?"

"Poor little lad!" she said, looking down at him with infinite tenderness. "I think he feels it, too. He

has not been like himself since I nursed him after his bath. There is no bitterness in him for me. He is the one treasure which has no alloy. I shall never tell him he has no father. He is yours, and he is mine. Do you think he will not be proud of his lineage the day he comes to know and understand it?"

"You put me to the blush," he said. "I might have known—I did know—that there is no room in you for pride, or shame, or any thing but pure and perfect love. You are not sorry to have known it?"

"Ah! no," she said, with a smile that filled his eyes with tears. "I am glad—I am glad from my heart!"

"Tell me, then, if you know—and yet I know so well myself that I need not ask you but for the bitter pleasure of hearing it from your lips—would any thing but the one Cause which parts us have sufficed to do it?"

"No," she answered, "there was no need to ask that question. What but God could have lifted us to the height where we can see nothing but Him beyond us, and feel nothing but that all sweetness comes from Him and can be fulfilled in Him only?"

"It is worth while to lose you, love," he said. "I never should have known you wholly but for that."

CHAPTER VII.

DOUBTLESS the least to be envied of these three was Richard Norton. He had been unable to resist the gibe with which he parted from his friend, but no one could be more sensible than he of the self-regarding irony of such a taunt issuing from his lips. Sympathy gave him understanding concerning the inaction and silence of Giddings in the past; there were already moments when he had no regret more intense than that arising from the fact that circumstances forbade his thorough imitation of them. For more than one substantial reason he would have been glad never to see again the woman who had duped him, and to content himself with dismissing her from his life with a warning which he felt sure she would not disregard. As he turned the matter over in his mind, recoiling alike from every aspect it presented, he reflected often that the facts probably tallied with his friend's understanding of them; that, at least, he was not imperatively called upon to doubt it, and that there was, therefore, no necessity for his further interference. Nothing could be more simple than the case would become, so far as he was concerned, if Giddings not only persisted in his incomprehensible determination to sacrifice himself and Katharine, but showed no intention of bringing the woman to justice. If they, who were the chief sufferers, chose to remain passive, why should he also not wash his hands of it and disclaim all responsibility?

Motives are very mixed, even with the least selfish, the least complex of us, and Richard Norton belonged to neither category. If his first emotion had been the

horror excited by his friend's position, his second, lasting, and more natural feeling had been that of relief concerning his own. Nothing disturbed it but the uneasy suspicion that Giddings lay under a mistake, which, having once entered his mind, stubbornly resisted every attempt he made to dislodge it. But, having suggested it, was it obligatory on him to go further, in the face of his friend's well-reasoned incredulity? He knew that he would be willing to extricate him in that way, and even more than willing, since it would untangle complications which did not exist in his own case. But he knew also that he had good reason to shrink from further personal investigation. He knew it by the very strength of the impulse which urged him to make it—an impulse which he sometimes looked at obliquely and called quixotic, and half-persuaded himself to be proud of, but which at others he examined coolly and put down at its just value. His knowledge of the woman he had married, incomplete before, yet rounding to completion, seemed to have suddenly expanded into fullness under the light just thrown upon it. He felt persuaded that he knew what she would do if pushed to an extremity, and the thought excited him much as the prospect of a skillful vivisection might have done. Were he in a position like that of Giddings, he was certain he would be unable to resist the temptation, since it attracted him so almost irresistibly already. And yet it had an undeniably ugly look. He cursed his friend's passivity, which in a manner challenged his own sense of justice to undertake the task. Why should not Giddings share, at least, in the responsibility by facing the whole situation?

He passed the day in solitude, torn by a violent internal conflict from which he emerged at last a conscious victor. He assured himself that his questionable impulse, having matched its full strength against a better prompting, had given way. There remained, of course, the possibility that Giddings had found his

self-imposed burden too heavy for him, and in that case he would still be ready to assist him in the way he first proposed ; but if not, he would simply notify the woman by letter that her game was up and drop out of the affair entirely. Some further steps it might be necessary to take hereafter ; he would be obliged to give his parents some inkling of the real facts when he returned after the fighting was over, but even that unpleasantness time and circumstances might possibly smooth away unaided. It was a dismal episode in his life, but one that would be quickly ended. He should doubtless look back upon it in future as the source of some not otherwise attainable and extremely useful experience.

At the station he met Louis Giddings and found opportunity for a few words with him. He saw at a glance that his friend had adhered to his determination, but could not refrain from putting the direct question and following it with another which regarded Katharine.

"Don't speak of her!" Giddings answered. "She is alive, and so am I. There is not much more to be said about either of us."

"You are suffering frightfully and are not fit to start. Can I do nothing to relieve you?"

"I am well enough physically," Giddings answered, with a rather dreary smile. "You don't look overcheerful yourself. I know of nothing you can do, unless you will undertake either to verify the suggestion you made this morning or to put me in a position to dismiss it entirely. It persists in recurring to me within the last hour or two in spite of my better judgment. I can't help hoping for a reprieve, you see, even after the drop has fallen. If I live to come back I shall look it up myself, unless you have previously done so. You seem to be in a better position than any one else to undertake it. It is not necessary to question her, or, at all events, to rely upon her testimony. There must be a record of her marriage with

Lloyd, and you have all the particulars in reference to mine."

"Have you mentioned it to Kitty?"

"No; the chance is too slender to build a hope on. To speak the truth, it never took even the slightest consistency in my mind until after I left her."

"Very well. In case the result is unsatisfactory to you, will you empower me to act for you in the manner I proposed?"

"No; all I can do in either event is to instruct you to have criminal proceedings instituted against her on my behalf. Under the circumstances that would be a necessary preliminary even to a civil action for divorce. The latter I will not take, but the former I can not in conscience dispense myself from taking."

"My own predicament, if I have to assume the other horn of the dilemma, is a pleasant one to consider," said Norton grimly, and yet with a look of relief which his friend saw and misinterpreted. "If you are not her husband, I am. Have you no suggestion to make with regard to that contingency?"

"You are a good fellow!" Giddings said, taking the other's hand. "No; I have none, except the one I made just now. It is as applicable to your case as to my own. Neither of us wishes to punish the woman, of course, but I am not quite so oblivious of my duties to society as your rebuke this morning showed you to suppose me."

"I was a fraud this morning," the doctor answered as he returned the pressure. "You ought not to need telling that I recoil from the whole thing with an utter loathing, and would be only too glad to turn my back upon it without more words. I have been considering the possibility of doing so ever since I left you. You are very sure it will not answer?"

Giddings shook his head.

"There are some crimes and some criminals," he said, "that one may safely leave to go scot-free of

human justice, or may, at least, absolve one's self from denouncing to it. This is not one of them."

"All right! I have been halting between several inclinations, but I see my way at present. When I have any thing definite to say I will let you know."

Dr. Norton started for Montreal that night and arrived there an hour or two after noon the following day. Entering a carriage at the station, he drove to Mr. Rector's office, where he passed some time in consultation, and then went on to the bureau of registration. He found some little trouble in getting at the marriage records of nine years back, but they were finally produced on the payment of double fees, and a certified copy of the one he wanted made out and given him. He forwarded this at once by mail to Giddings at Washington, and preceded it by a telegram. One other business call he made, and then went into a hotel and ordered a dinner, for which he had small appetite, and during which he drank more wine than was his custom. Then he set forth to interview his wife. He was conscious of a certain trepidation of the heart which made his gait somewhat less brisk than usual, but he assured himself that his brain was cool and his determination like a rock.

Mrs. Norton was within, the clerk informed him, and, refusing to be announced, he passed up the stairs. The thought crossed his mind that he would have preferred to enter in her absence and let her find him unexpectedly on her return. That, however, was a mere detail; he even reflected further that the presence of the young man in the office below would naturally have taken off the edge of her surprise in that case. Then he hesitated whether or not to rap at her door before entering, and finally concluded to try the handle first. It yielded to his pressure and he went in. The room was a long one, connecting, at the end furthest from the door, with a chamber which also stood open. She was in the latter sitting with her back to him before a mirror, apparently about to

fasten up her hair. It hung to the floor beside her, a dark auburn mass, rippling in loose waves from the crown to the extremities, and shining like burnished copper against her white peignoir where the afternoon sun fell on it.

He closed the door softly and turned the key. The carpet was thick, and the sound of his steps did not attract her attention, though he made no special effort to tread lightly. But before he reached the entrance of the room where she was sitting she caught sight of his reflection in the mirror, and for a moment they looked at each other before she turned. He said to himself that if fear were unmistakably written in her dilated eyes and on her parted lips, it yielded almost instantaneously to another emotion not less genuine. On one point at least she had not duped him. So much the worse for both of them!

As for her, her heart stood still an instant. Her thoughts, which for days had been concentrated on the same subject as his, scattered suddenly and left nothing but a blank. She was conscious only of the present. What it held for her was a mystery to which Richard's impenetrable face gave her no clew. Whatever it was, he was there to administer it in person. She rose and came toward him, seeing that he made no movement to approach her, and offered a kiss, which he accepted.

"How you startled me!" she said. "Is any thing the matter? Is your father worse? Is he dead?"

"No," he answered, "he is much the same as when we left him. I came back to make some inquiries which I had stupidly forgotten, and which require exact answers before I can make the necessary legal arrangements for you. I might have written, I suppose, but I still had a little time at my disposal and preferred to come."

"That is pleasant," she said, dimpling into a smile of relief and satisfaction. "You don't need to put them right away, do you? Sit down and ask your

questions at your leisure. Why are you so stiff and cool?"

"Suppose we get our business over first. I want simply the date of your first marriage. Have you got a certificate?"

"I think it is in my desk there by the window. Do you want to see it, or will it be sufficient to tell you the day?"

She named it as she ended. It was that which he had learned already.

"The certificate will be the proper thing, I fancy. Shall I look for it?"

"Yes, unless you want me to save you the trouble. The key is in the lock."

He went over to the desk and sat down in front of it, and presently she followed and stood, half-fronting him, between the window and the chimney-piece. The desk, which stood on a small table, had little in it: a tiny bundle of notes he had written her in London before their marriage, packets of envelopes and paper, a large photograph of himself—apparently nothing more.

"It is not here," he said, looking up at her.

"There is a false bottom," she answered, showing him the trick of it. Like the upper part, it was nearly empty. The paper he sought lay there, folded into small compass, and beside it was that she had received in London. There was a small dagger also, in a sheath, with a fine, thin blade, which he pulled out and looked at with a curious smile, and did not replace. He picked up a tiny vial, too, with a tightly-fitting stopper, which being opened gave out the pungent odor of bitter almonds. He laid it back again without a comment and without refitting the false bottom, and bent his head over the certificate. Then he took up the other and read it over. She was still nearly fronting him, and, finding he did not speak, she asked him after a little interval:

"Well, is that all right?"

"Not quite," he answered, speaking slowly and as if considering, his eyes bent upon the papers in his hands; "your collection does not seem to be complete." He lifted his head now and looked straight at her. "Did you not get one the day you went over into New York with Louis Giddings? It ought to come between these two, I think."

She turned deathly white and sick, and would have fallen if he had not caught her. He saw, nevertheless, that she was not fainting, and took no further pains than to put her in an arm-chair that stood nearly in the middle of the room, before the mantle, against which he placed himself and stood looking at her in silence.

"Before God," she said at last, speaking in a thick, agitated voice, "I have been trying to get my courage up to tell you. If you do not believe me you may look in my portfolio for the letter which I began writing you last night."

"I don't think I care to see it. Your repentance comes a little late. The fact is that you mistook your line in life, my dear. You put too high a value on your charms. The market rate is lower than that represented by these papers." He had them still dangling between the fingers of his right hand as he stood with both elbows resting on the low chimney-piece. She turned scarlet, but said nothing.

"What I don't quite understand," he went on again after a pause, "is your motive for exacting one from Giddings also. You were quite aware, doubtless, that you had no right to do it. Wouldn't he take you otherwise?"

"I was not certain I had no right," she said, speaking in the same smothered voice. "I married Burton Lloyd the very day his ship sailed, and news came that it was lost and nearly all on board with it. I thought he might be one of them—I hoped he was."

"Yes? You must have been a comfort to him. You seem to have a genius for confession, if I may

take your word about the letter yonder. Did you ever tell Lloyd about your little escapade in his absence?"

She made no answer.

"The trouble with your confessions," he went on, "seems to be that they are not sufficiently complete. When you owned up to Giddings, why did you not tell him the whole truth?"

"So I did, and more than really was true. I have been sorry for it ever since, but I thought—" She stopped again.

Dr. Norton gave a bitter little laugh.

"More than the truth is less than the truth. You might at least have put him out of the torture of supposing that he had first been swindled into marriage and *then* deserted. Do you know what an honest man does in such a case? If he can not find the woman and wring her neck, he waits for her death to release him in some less satisfactory way. You ruined five years of his life for him, and now your lie has well-nigh broken it again, and with it the heart of a woman whom your ears are not fit to hear named. Why did you not have the honesty to tell him you were not his wife? Why did you pretend to marry him at all?"

"Because—because I—for the same reason that I married you. You know very well what that was."

"You flatter me immensely," he said, mocking. "I think I do. What I don't know, and should like to hear, is your motive for not releasing him. Why did you not tell him you had never been his wife?"

"I thought I did. I don't know what I said to him—more than was true, as far as Lloyd was concerned. I meant to go away and say nothing at all, and then the thought of him came over me just at the last, and what misery he would be in, and I could not bear to. I did tell him he was entirely free. How could he be if he were married to me? I should think he would have known that any way."

She was speaking the truth, and Norton knew it.

"God!" he said, "it is a pity that your lying is not as clumsy as your truthtelling. Do you mean that the thought never crossed your mind, then or afterward, that your little addition to the truth—a sweet, fragrant invention it was to occur to the mind of a young girl!—would have the effect of shutting his mouth, and that it might be just as well that he should consider himself bound?"

She was silent.

"Come!" he said roughly, "I want an answer and a straight one."

"Yes," she said, hardly above her breath, "it did, but not then."

"But after you learned the fact from me it did? What calculations did you base upon it? You thought, perhaps, that you might ring him into your present little game and blindfold me completely?" He laughed unpleasantly. "Jove! it was a profound, deep-witted scheme that does credit to your knowledge of human nature! I should like to have been by and overheard you broach the subject to him!"

"I did not mean to," she said, stung at last into resentment by this scoff. "I meant to throw myself upon his mercy, if I appealed to him at all; and I wish to Heaven I had done so! He is not like you! He is a man, at all events, and would have put me out of my misery without taunting me into desperation first!"

"Yes," he said, watching her with a cool, scientific interest, as if taking note of how many nerves were writhing beneath his scalpel, "he is a man—you are quite right—and a singularly upright one into the bargain. I am grateful, for my own part, that you fell into the hands of such a one as he, and not of a wiser one who would have taken you at his own valuation *and not* at yours."

"As you did?"

The veins stood out like cords on her tormentor's temples and along the sides of his neck.

"You are a wise woman!" he said in a voice that betrayed, in despite of him, some heat of passion. "Just as I did, if you like! Nothing could be better, so far as we are concerned, since it places us in the only position where we could put a stop to your career. Do you know what I came here for to-day? To determine which one of us should have the satisfaction of sending you to pick oakum for the next two years. Your merciful, high-minded man, who stands so much above me in your estimation, was the first one to suggest it, and I am merely carrying out his instructions."

She rose from her chair, her eyes dilated, and made a step toward him.

"What do you mean?" she gasped.

"What I say. He proposes to indict you for bigamy, and I intend to aid him. When you come out into free air again there will be no fear of your betraying more men into the trap where you put him and me. You will have been branded dangerous."

He had relapsed again into apparent composure, although the flush had not yet quite faded from his face. She came nearer to him, her eyes wild, like those of a hunted animal, her clasped hands raised, her voice thick and half-suffocated with the panting of her heart.

"For God's sake, Richard, don't do that! Take a man's revenge on me, at least. Kill me and be done with it. God knows I am tired enough of living!"

"I thought it would come to that," he said in a cutting, deliberate voice. "You think, then, that it would be worth an honest man's while to get his neck stretched for you?"

He drew out his watch and looked at it.

"*If I* were you," he said, his eyes running over her

carelessly from head to foot, "I would put up all that hair and change my dress. I have had a warrant made out, and left word at the police station as I came up to have an escort sent to attend you to your temporary quarters until permanent ones can be found for you. It can't be long now before they are here."

She came close up to him and put both hands upon his shoulders. He stood immovable.

"Have pity on me!" she begged. "If not on me, take pity on your child! Will you let it be born in prison?"

His face underwent a sudden change, and she saw it and took hope again. His lips trembled and he hesitated. She dared not risk another word, so evenly poised did she feel the balances to be in which her fate was hanging. She only looked in his eyes with an appealing gaze under which his own sank for a moment. There came along the corridor at the end of which the apartment was situated the tread of heavy feet, and the voice of an attendant giving directions about the number on their door. Norton bit his lip and then sighed heavily.

"Poor little wretch!" he said in a voice penetrated with a bitter unavailing anguish, "it must bear the penalty."

At that moment he had forgotten alike his purpose and his premonition. Nothing spoke in him but the instinct of paternity. He saw himself in the near future rescuing what was his from this wreck of humanity, and perhaps finding in it hereafter some compensation for the broken dreams of his young manhood. He looked at her with eyes full of compassion, but she read in them that his resolution was unshaken.

He left her standing near the chimney-piece and went to the door, which had resounded twice already under the knuckles of the officers. She retreated further toward the window with the cowering gesture of a creature which feels itself at bay and seeks hope-

lessly for a refuge or some instant of delay. Her eyes fell on the open desk, and she put her hand out toward it. Her husband had his back to her. He stood at the half-open door, beyond whose aperture she saw the faces of the men, and she heard with distinctness the words in which he instructed them as to their duty. Suddenly one of the officers made a quick movement forward, as if to rush past him into the room: but the doctor, whose left hand was already resting on the jamb, tightened his hold upon it and resisted the impetuous pressure.

"No violence!" he said. "There is no occasion for it. You will remain here at the door while she changes her dress, and then she will go with you quietly."

There was a fall behind him, and at the same instant the man's efforts ceased. He seemed to grow suddenly flaccid.

"She won't go at all, sir," he said in a low, horror-stricken voice. "You shouldn't have stopped me. I saw she was going to do for herself."

THE END.

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